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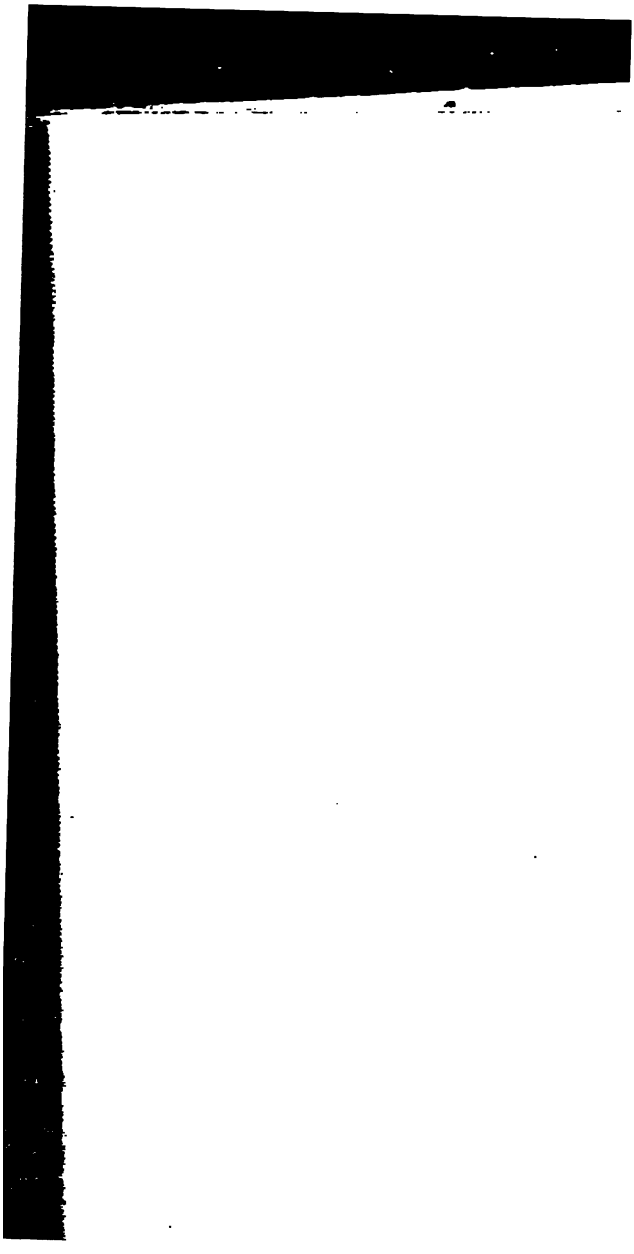


English Men of Letters

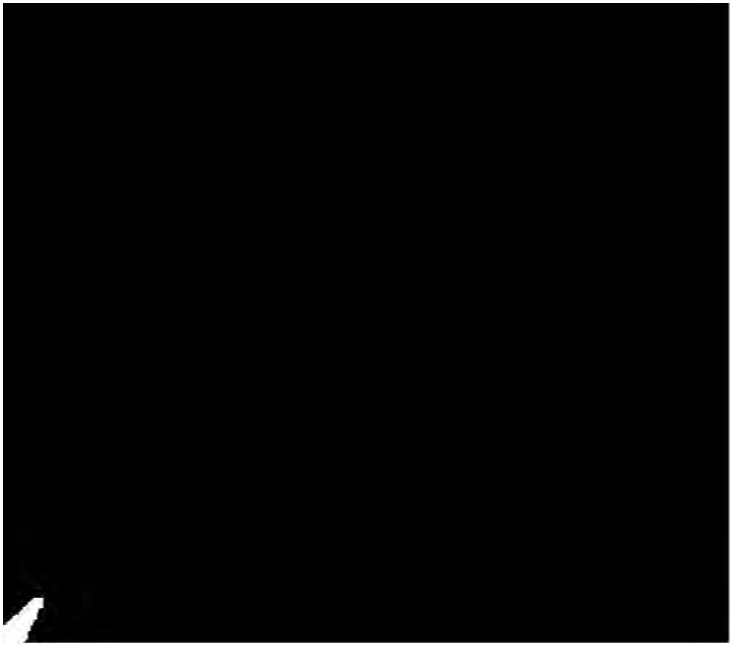
EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

VOL. IX

FIELDING

THACKERAY

DICKENS



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By AUSTIN DOBSON

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By ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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By ADOLPHUS WILLIAM WARD

London
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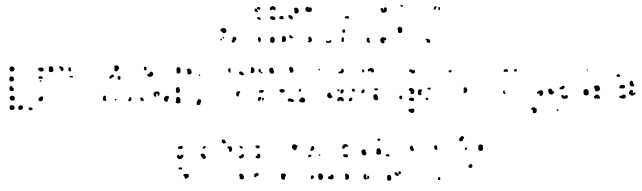

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PREFATORY NOTE.

FROM a critical point of view, the works of Fielding have received abundant examination at the hands of a long line of distinguished writers. Of these, the latest is by no means the least; and as Mr. Leslie Stephen's brilliant studies, in the recent *édition de luxe* and the *Cornhill Magazine*, are now in every one's hands, it is perhaps no more than a wise discretion which has prompted me to confine my attention more strictly to the purely biographical side of the subject. In the present memoir, therefore, I have made it my duty, primarily, to verify such scattered anecdotes respecting Fielding as have come down to us; to correct (I hope not obtrusively) a few mis-statements which have crept into previous accounts; and to add such supplementary details as I have been able to discover for myself.

In this task I have made use of the following authorities:—

I. Arthur Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, Esq.* This was prefixed to the first collected edition of Fielding's works published by Andrew Millar in April 1762; and it continued for a long time to be the recognised authority for Fielding's life. It is possible that it fairly reproduces his personality, as presented by contemporary tradition; but it is misleading in its facts, and needlessly diffuse. Under

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pretence of respecting "the Manes of the dead," the writer seems to have found it pleasanter to fill his space with vagrant discussions on the "Middle Comedy of the Greeks" and the machinery of the *Rape of the Lock*, than to make the requisite biographical inquiries. This is the more to be deplored, because, in 1762, Fielding's widow, brother, and sister, as well as his friend Lyttelton, were still alive, and trustworthy information should have been procurable.

II. Watson's *Life of Henry Fielding, Esq.* This is usually to be found prefixed to a selection of Fielding's works issued at Edinburgh. It also appeared as a volume in 1807, although there is no copy of it in this form at the British Museum. It carries Murphy a little farther, and corrects him in some instances. But its author had clearly never even seen the *Miscellanies* of 1743, with their valuable Preface, for he speaks of them as one volume, and in apparent ignorance of their contents.

III. Sir Walter Scott's biographical sketch for Ballantyne's *Novelist's Library*. This was published in 1821; and is now included in the writer's *Miscellaneous Prose Works*. Sir Walter made no pretence to original research, and even spoke slightingly of this particular work; but it has all the charm of his practised and genial pen.

IV. Roscoe's Memoir, compiled for the one-volume edition of Fielding, published by Washbourne and others in 1840.

V. Thackeray's well-known lecture, in the *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*, 1853.

VI. *The Life of Henry Fielding; with Notices of his Writings, his Times, and his Contemporaries.* By Frederick Lawrence. 1855. This is an exceedingly painstaking book; and constitutes the first serious attempt at a biography. Its chief defect—as pointed out at the time of its appearance—is an ill-judged emulation of

Forster's *Goldsmith*. The author attempted to make Fielding a literary centre, which is impossible; and the attempt has involved him in needless digressions. He is also not always careful to give chapter and verse for his statements.

VII. Thomas Keightley's papers *On the Life and Writings of Henry Fielding* in *Fraser's Magazine* for January and February 1858. These, prompted by Mr. Lawrence's book, are most valuable, if only for the author's frank distrust of his predecessors. They are the work of an enthusiast, and a very conscientious examiner. If, as reported, Mr. Keightley himself meditated a life of Fielding, it is much to be regretted that he never carried out his intention.

Upon the two last-mentioned works I have chiefly relied in the preparation of this study. I have freely availed myself of the material that both authors collected, verifying it always, and extending it wherever I could. Of my other sources of information—pamphlets, reviews, memoirs, and newspapers of the day—the list would be too long; and sufficient references to them are generally given in the body of the text. I will only add that I think there is scarcely a quotation of importance in these pages which has not been compared with the original; and, except where otherwise stated, all extracts from Fielding himself are taken from the first editions.

At this distance of time, new facts respecting a man of whom so little has been recorded require to be announced with considerable caution. Some definite additions to Fielding lore I have, however, been enabled to make. Thanks to the late Colonel J. L. Chester, who was engaged, only a few weeks before his death, in friendly investigations on my behalf, I am able to give, for the first time, the date and place of Fielding's second marriage, and the baptismal dates of all the children by that marriage, except the eldest. I

am also able to fix approximately the true period of his love-affair with Miss Sarah Andrew. From the original assignment at South Kensington I have ascertained the exact sum paid by Millar for *Joseph Andrews;* and in chapter v. will be found a series of extracts from a very interesting correspondence, which does not appear to have been hitherto published, between Aaron Hill, his daughters, and Richardson, respecting *Tom Jones.* Although I cannot claim credit for the discovery, I believe the present is also the first biography of Fielding which entirely discredits the unlikely story of his having been a stroller at Bartholomew Fair; and I may also, I think, claim to have thrown some additional light on Fielding's relations with the Cibbers, seeing that the last critical essay upon the author of the *Apology* which I have met with, contains no reference to Fielding at all. For such minor novelties as the passage from the *Universal Spectator* at p. 26, and the account of the projected translation of Lucian at p. 163, etc., the reader is referred to the book itself, where these, and other waifs and strays, are duly indicated. If, in my endeavour to secure what is freshest, I have at the same time neglected a few stereotyped quotations, which have hitherto seemed indispensable in writing of Fielding, I trust I may be forgiven.

Brief as it is, the book has not been without its obligations. To Mr. R. F. Sketchley, Keeper of the Dyce and Forster Collections at South Kensington, I am indebted for reference to the Hill correspondence, and for other kindly offices; to Mr. Frederick Locker for permission to collate Fielding's last letter with the original in his possession. My thanks are also due to Mr. R. Arthur Kinglake, J.P., of Taunton; to the Rev. Edward Hale of Eton College, the Rev. G. C. Green of Modbury, Devon, the Rev. W. S. Shaw of Twerton-on-Avon, and Mr. Richard Garnett of the British Museum. Without some expression of gratitude to the

last mentioned, it would indeed be almost impossible to conclude any modern preface of this kind. If I have omitted the names of others who have been good enough to assist me, I must ask them to accept my acknowledgments although they are not specifically expressed.

EALING, *March* 1883.

I have taken advantage of the present issue to add, in the form of Appendices, some supplementary particulars which have come to my knowledge since the book was first published. The most material of these is the curious confirmation and extension of Fielding's love affair with Sarah Andrew. Besides these additions, a few necessary rectifications have been made in the text.

A. D.

EALING, *April* 1889.

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FIELDING.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS—FIRST PLAYS.

LIKE his contemporary Smollett, Henry Fielding came of an ancient family, and might, in his Horatian moods, have traced his origin to Inachus. The lineage of the house of Denbigh, as given in Burke, fully justifies the splendid but sufficiently quoted eulogy of Gibbon. From that first Jeffrey of Hapsburgh, who came to England, *temp.* Henry III., and assumed the name of Fieldeng, or Filding, "from his father's pretensions to the dominions of Lauffenbourg and Rinfilding," the future novelist could boast a long line of illustrious ancestors. There was a Sir William Feilding killed at Tewkesbury, and a Sir Everard who commanded at Stoke. Another Sir William, a staunch Royalist, was created Earl of Denbigh, and died in fighting King Charles's battles. Of his two sons, the elder, Basil, who succeeded to the title, was a Parliamentarian, and served at Edgehill under Essex. George, his second son, was raised to the peerage of Ireland as Viscount Callan, with succession to the earldom of Desmond; and from this, the younger branch of the Denbigh family, Henry Fielding directly descended. The Earl of Des-

mond's fifth son, John, entered the Church, becoming Canon of Salisbury and Chaplain to William III. By his wife Bridget, daughter of Scipio Cockain, Esq., of Somerset, he had three sons and three daughters. Edmund, the third son, was a soldier, who fought with distinction under Marlborough. When about the age of thirty, he married Sarah, daughter of Sir Henry Gould, Knt., of Sharpham Park, near Glastonbury, in Somerset, and one of the Judges of the King's Bench. These last were the parents of the novelist, who was born at Sharpham Park on the 22d of April 1707. One of Dr. John Fielding's nieces, it may here be added, married the first Duke of Kingston, becoming the mother of Lady Mary Pierrepont, afterwards Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who was thus Henry Fielding's second cousin. She had, however, been born in 1689, and was consequently some years his senior.

According to a pedigree given in Nichols (*History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*), Edmund Fielding was only a lieutenant when he married; and it is even not improbable (as Mr. Keightley conjectures from the nearly secret union of *Lieutenant* Booth and Amelia in the later novel) that the match may have been a stolen one. At all events, the bride continued to reside at her father's house; and the fact that Sir Henry Gould, by his will made in March 1706, left his daughter £3000, which was to be invested "in the purchase either of a Church or Colledge lease, or of lands of Inheritance," for her sole use, her husband having "nothing to doe with it," would seem (as Mr. Keightley suggests) to indicate a distrust of his military, and possibly impecunious, son-in-law. This money, it is also important to remember, was to come to her children at her death. Sir

Henry Gould did not long survive the making of his will, and died in March 1710.[1] The Fieldings must then have removed to a small house at East Stour (now Stower), in Dorsetshire, where Sarah Fielding was born in the following November. It may be that this property was purchased with Mrs. Fielding's money; but information is wanting upon the subject. At East Stour, according to the extracts from the parish register given in Hutchins's *History of Dorset*, four children were born,—namely, Sarah, above mentioned, afterwards the authoress of *David Simple*, Anne, Beatrice, and another son, Edmund. Edmund, says Arthur Murphy, "was an officer in the marine service," and (adds Mr. Lawrence) "died young." Anne died at East Stour in August 1716. Of Beatrice nothing further is known. These would appear to have been all the children of Edmund Fielding by his first wife, although, as Sarah Fielding is styled on her monument at Bath the *second* daughter of General Fielding, it is not impossible that another daughter may have been born at Sharpham Park.

At East Stour the Fieldings certainly resided until April 1718, when Mrs. Fielding died, leaving her elder son a boy of not quite eleven years of age. How much longer the family remained there is unrecorded; but it is clear that a great part of Henry Fielding's childhood must have been spent by the "pleasant Banks of sweetly-winding Stour" which passes through it, and to which he subsequently refers in *Tom Jones*. His educa-

[1] Mr. Keightley, who seems to have seen the will, dates it—doubtless by a slip of the pen—May 1708. Reference to the original, however, now at Somerset House, shows the correct date to be March 8, 1706, before which time the marriage of Fielding's parents must therefore be placed.

tion during this time was confided to a certain Mr Oliver, whom Lawrence designates the "family chaplain." Keightley supposes that he was the curate of East Stour; but Hutchins, a better authority than either, says that he was the clergyman of Motcombe, a neighbouring village. Of this gentleman, according to Murphy, Parson Trulliber in *Joseph Andrews* is a "very humorous and striking portrait." It is certainly more humorous than complimentary.

From Mr. Oliver's fostering care—and the result shows that, whatever may have been the pig-dealing propensities of Parson Trulliber, it was not entirely profitless—Fielding was transferred to Eton. When this took place is not known; but at that time boys entered the school much earlier than they do now, and it was probably not long after his mother's death. The Eton boys were then, as at present, divided into collegers and oppidans. There are no registers of oppidans before the end of the last century; but the Provost of Eton has been good enough to search the college lists from 1715 to 1735, and there is no record of any Henry Fielding, nor indeed of any Fielding at all. It may therefore be concluded that he was an oppidan. No particulars of his stay at Eton have come down to us; but it is to be presumed Murphy's statement that, "when he left the place, he was said to be uncommonly versed in the Greek authors, and an early master of the Latin classics," is not made without foundation.[1] We have also his own authority (in *Tom*

[1] Fielding's own words in the verses to Walpole some years later scarcely go so far :—

"*Tuscan* and *French* are in my Head;
Latin I write, and *Greek* I——read."

Jones) for supposing that he occasionally, if not frequently, sacrificed "with true *Spartan* devotion" at the "birchen Altar," of which a representation is to be found in Mr. Maxwell Lyte's history of the College. And it may fairly be inferred that he took part in the different sports and pastimes of the day, such as Conquering Lobs, Steal baggage, Chuck, Starecaps, and so forth. Nor does it need any strong effort of imagination to conclude that he bathed in "Sandy hole" or "Cuckow ware," attended the cock-fights in Bedford's Yard and the bull-baiting in Bachelor's Acre, drank mild punch at the "Christopher," and, no doubt, was occasionally brought back by Jack Cutler, "Pursuivant of Runaways," to make his explanations to Dr. Bland the Head-Master, or Francis Goode the Usher. Among his school-fellows were some who subsequently attained to high dignities in the State, and still remained his friends. Foremost of these was George Lyttelton, later the statesman and orator, who had already commenced poet as an Eton boy with his "Soliloquy of a Beauty in the Country." Another was the future Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, the wit and squib-writer, then known as Charles Hanbury only. A third was Thomas Winnington, for whom, in after years, Fielding fought hard with brain and pen when Tory scribblers assailed his memory. Of those who must be regarded as contemporaries merely, were William Pitt, the "Great Commoner," and yet greater Earl of Chatham; Henry Fox, Lord Holland; and Charles Pratt, Earl Camden. Gilbert West, the translator of Pindar, may also have been at Eton in Fielding's time, as he was only a year older, and was intimate with Lyttelton. Thomas Augustine Arne, again, famous in days to come as Dr. Arne, was

doubtless also at this date practising sedulously upon that "miserable cracked common flute," with which tradition avers he was wont to torment his school-fellows. Gray and Horace Walpole belong to a later period.

During his stay at Eton, Fielding had been rapidly developing from a boy into a young man. When he left school it is impossible to say; but he was probably seventeen or eighteen years of age, and it is at this stage of his career that must be fixed an occurrence which one of his biographers places much farther on. This is his earliest recorded love-affair. At Lyme Regis there resided a young lady, who, in addition to great personal charms, had the advantage of being the only daughter and heiress of one Solomon Andrew, deceased, a merchant of considerable local reputation. Lawrence says that she was Fielding's cousin. This may be so; but the statement is unsupported by any authority. It is certain, however, that her father was dead, and that she was living "in maiden meditation" at Lyme with one of her guardians, Mr. Andrew Tucker. In his chance visits to that place, young Fielding appears to have become desperately enamoured of her, and to have sadly fluttered the Dorset dovecotes by his pertinacious and undesirable attentions. At one time he seems to have actually meditated the abduction of his "flame," for an entry in the town archives, discovered by Mr. George Roberts, sometime Mayor of Lyme, who tells the story, declares that Andrew Tucker, Esq., went in fear of his life "owing to the behaviour of Henry Fielding and his attendant, or man." Such a state of things (especially when guardians have sons of their own) is clearly not to be endured; and Miss Andrew was prudently trans-

ferred to the care of another guardian, Mr. Rhodes of Modbury, in South Devon, to whose son, a young gentleman of Oxford, she was promptly married. Burke (*Landed Gentry*, 1858) dates the marriage in 1726, a date which is practically confirmed by the baptism of a child at Modbury in April of the following year. Burke further describes the husband as Mr. Ambrose Rhodes of Buckland House, Buckland-Tout-Saints. His son, Mr. Rhodes of Bellair, near Exeter, was gentleman of the Privy Chamber to George III.; and one of his descendants possessed a picture which passed for the portrait of Sophia Western. The tradition of the Tucker family pointed to Miss Andrew as the original of Fielding's heroine; but though such a supposition is intelligible, it is untenable, since he says distinctly (Book XIII. chap. i. of *Tom Jones*) that his model was his first wife, whose likeness he moreover draws very specifically in another place, by declaring that she resembled Margaret Cecil, Lady Ranelagh, and, more nearly, "the famous Dutchess of *Mazarine*."[1]

With this early escapade is perhaps to be connected what seems to have been one of Fielding's earliest literary efforts. This is a modernisation in burlesque octosyllabic verse of part of Juvenal's sixth satire. In the "Preface" to the later published *Miscellanies*, it is said to have been "originally sketched out before he was Twenty," and to have constituted "all the Revenge taken by an injured Lover." But it must have been largely revised subsequent to that date, for it contains references to Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Woffington, Cibber the younger, and even to Richardson's *Pamela*. It has no special merit, although some of the

[1] See Appendix No. I.: Fielding and Sarah Andrew.

couplets have the true Swiftian turn. If Murphy's statement be correct, that the author "went from Eton to Leyden," it must have been planned at the latter place, where, he tells us in the preface to *Don Quixote in England*, he also began that comedy. Notwithstanding these literary distractions, he is nevertheless reported to have studied the civilians "with a remarkable application for about two years." At the expiration of this time, remittances from home failing, he was obliged to forego the lectures of the "learned Vitriarius" (then Professor of Civil Law at Leyden University), and return to London, which he did at the beginning of 1728 or the end of 1727.

The fact was that his father, never a rich man, had married again. His second wife was a widow named Eleanor Rasa; and by this time he was fast acquiring a second family. Under the pressure of his growing cares, he found himself, however willing, as unable to maintain his eldest son in London as he had previously been to discharge his expenses at Leyden. Nominally, he made him an allowance of two hundred a year; but this, as Fielding himself explained, "any body might pay that would." The consequence was, that not long after the arrival of the latter in the Metropolis he had given up all idea of pursuing the law, to which his mother's legal connections had perhaps first attracted him, and had determined to adopt the more seductive occupation of living by his wits. At this date he was in the prime of youth. From the portrait by Hogarth representing him at a time when he was broken in health and had lost his teeth, it is difficult to reconstruct his likeness at twenty. But we may fairly assume the "high-

arched Roman nose" with which his enemies reproached him, the dark eyes, the prominent chin, and the humorous expression; and it is clear that he must have been tall and vigorous, for he was over six feet when he died, and had been remarkably strong and active. Add to this that he inherited a splendid constitution, with an unlimited capacity for enjoyment, and we have a fair idea of Henry Fielding at that moment of his career, when with passions "tremblingly alive all o'er"—as Murphy says—he stood,

"This way and that dividing the swift mind,"

between the professions of hackney-writer and hackney-coachman. His natural bias was towards literature, and his opportunities, if not his inclinations, directed him to dramatic writing.

It is not necessary to attempt any detailed account of the state of the stage at this epoch. Nevertheless, if only to avoid confusion in the future, it will be well to enumerate the several London theatres in 1728, the more especially as the list is by no means lengthy. First and foremost there was the old Opera House in the Haymarket, built by Vanbrugh, as far back as 1705, upon the site now occupied by Her Majesty's Theatre. This was the home of that popular Italian song which so excited the anger of thorough-going Britons; and here, at the beginning of 1728, they were performing Handel's opera of *Siroe*, and delighting the *cognoscenti* by *Dite che fà*, the echo-air in the same composer's *Tolomeo*. Opposite the Opera House, and, in position, only "a few feet distant" from the existing Haymarket Theatre, was the New, or Little Theatre in the Haymarket, which, from

the fact that it had been opened eight years before by "the French Comedians," was also sometimes styled the French House. Next comes the no-longer-existent theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which Christopher Rich had rebuilt in 1714, and which his son John had made notorious for pantomimes. Here the *Beggar's Opera*, precursor of a long line of similar productions, had just been successfully produced. Finally, most ancient of them all, there was the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane, otherwise the King's Play House, or Old House. The virtual patentees at this time were the actors Colley Cibber, Robert Wilks, and Barton Booth. The two former were just playing the *Provok'd Husband*, in which the famous Mrs. Oldfield (Pope's "Narcissa") had created a *furore* by her assumption of Lady Townley. These, in February 1728, were the four principal London theatres. Goodman's Fields, where Garrick made his *début*, was not opened until the following year, and Covent Garden belongs to a still later date.

Fielding's first dramatic essay—or, to speak more precisely, the first of his dramatic essays that was produced upon the stage—was a five-act comedy entitled *Love in Several Masques*. It was played at Drury Lane in February 1728, succeeding the *Provok'd Husband*. In his "Preface" the young author refers to the disadvantage under which he laboured in following close upon that comedy, and also in being "cotemporary with an Entertainment which engrosses the whole Talk and Admiration of the Town,"—*i.e.* the *Beggar's Opera*. He also acknowledges the kindness of Wilks and Cibber "previous to its Representation," and the fact that he had thus acquired their suffrages makes it doubtful

whether his stay at Leyden was not really briefer than is generally supposed, or that he left Eton much earlier. In either case he must have been in London some months before *Love in Several Masques* appeared, for a first play by an untried youth of twenty, however promising, is not easily brought upon the boards in any era; and from his own utterances in *Pasquin*, ten years later, it is clear that it was no easier then than now. The sentiments of the Fustian of that piece in the following protest probably give an accurate picture of the average dramatic experiences of Henry Fielding:—

"These little things, Mr. *Sneerwell*, will sometimes happen. Indeed a Poet undergoes a great deal before he comes to his Third Night; first with the Muses, who are humorous Ladies, and must be attended; for if they take it into their Head at any time to go abroad and leave you, you will pump your Brain in vain: Then, Sir, with the Master of a *Playhouse* to get it acted, *whom you generally follow a quarter of a Year before you know whether he will receive it or no;* and then perhaps he tells you it won't do, and returns it you again, reserving the Subject, and perhaps the Name, which he brings out in his next *Pantomime;* but if he should receive the Play, then you must attend again to get it writ out into Parts, and Rehears'd. Well, Sir, at last the Rehearsals begin; then, Sir, begins another Scene of Trouble with the Actors, some of whom dont like their Parts, and all are continually plaguing you with Alterations: At length, after having waded thro' all these Difficulties, his [the ?] Play appears on the Stage, where one Man Hisses out of Resentment to the Author; a Second out of Dislike to the House; a Third out of Dislike to the Actor; a Fourth out of Dislike to the Play; a Fifth for the Joke sake; a Sixth to keep all the rest in Company. Enemies abuse him, Friends give him up, the Play is damn'd, and the Author goes to the Devil, so ends the Farce."

To which Sneerwell replies, with much promptitude:

"The Tragedy rather, I think, Mr. *Fustian*." But whatever may have been its preliminary difficulties, Fielding's first play was not exposed to so untoward a fate. It was well received. As might be expected in a beginner, and as indeed the references in the Preface to Wycherley and Congreve would lead us to expect, it was an obvious attempt in the manner of those then all-popular writers. The dialogue is ready and witty. But the characters have that obvious defect which Lord Beaconsfield recognised when he spoke in later life of his own earliest efforts. "Books written by boys," he says, "which pretend to give a picture of manners and to deal in knowledge of human nature must necessarily be founded on affectation." To this rule the personages of *Love in Several Masques* are no exception. They are drawn rather from the stage than from life, and there is little constructive skill in the plot. A certain booby squire, Sir Positive Trap, seems like a first indication of some of the later successes in the novels; but the rest of the *dramatis personæ* are puppets. The success of the piece was probably owing to the acting of Mrs. Oldfield, who took the part of Lady Matchless, a character closely related to the Lady Townleys and Lady Betty Modishes, in which she won her triumphs. She seems, indeed, to have been unusually interested in this comedy, for she consented to play in it notwithstanding a "slight Indisposition" contracted "by her violent Fatigue in the Part of Lady Townly," and she assisted the author with her corrections and advice — perhaps with her influence as an actress. Fielding's distinguished kinswoman Lady Mary Wortley Montagu also read the MS. Looking to certain scenes in it, the protestation in the Prologue—

"*Nought shall offend the Fair Ones Ears to-day,*
Which they might blush to hear, or blush to say"—

has an air of insincerity, although, contrasted with some of the writer's later productions, *Love in Several Masques* is comparatively pure. But he might honestly think that the work which had received the *imprimatur* of a stage-queen and a lady of quality should fairly be regarded as morally blameless, and it is not necessary to bring any bulk of evidence to prove that the morality of 1728 differed from the morality of to-day.

To the last-mentioned year is ascribed a poem entitled the "*Masquerade*. Inscribed to C—t H—d—g—r. By Lemuel Gulliver, Poet Laureate to the King of Lilliput." In this Fielding made his satirical contribution to the attacks on those impure gatherings organised by the notorious Heidegger, which Hogarth had not long before stigmatised pictorially in the plate known to collectors as the "large Masquerade Ticket." As verse this performance is worthless, and it is not very forcibly on the side of good manners; but the ironic dedication has a certain touch of Fielding's later fashion. Two other poetical pieces, afterwards included in the *Miscellanies* of 1743, also bear the date of 1728. One is *A Description of U—n G—* (alias *New Hog's Norton*) *in Com. Hants*, which Mr. Keightley has identified with Upton Grey, near Odiham, in Hampshire. It is a burlesque description of a tumble-down country-house in which the writer was staying, and is addressed to Rosalinda. The other is entitled *To Euthalia*, from which it must be concluded that, in 1728, Sarah Andrew had found more than one successor. But in spite of some biographers, and of the apparent encouragement given to his first comedy, Fielding does

not seem to have followed up dramatic authorship with equal vigour, or at all events with equal success. His real connection with the stage does not begin until January 1730, when the *Temple Beau* was produced by Giffard the actor at the theatre in Goodman's Fields, which had then just been opened by Thomas Odell; and it may be presumed that his incentive was rather want of funds than desire of fame. *The Temple Beau* certainly shows an advance upon its predecessor; but it is an advance in the same direction, imitation of Congreve; and although Geneste ranks it among the best of Fielding's plays, it is doubtful whether modern criticism would sustain his verdict. It ran for a short time, and was then withdrawn. The Prologue was the work of James Ralph, afterwards Fielding's colleague in the *Champion*, and it thus refers to the prevailing taste. The *Beggar's Opera* had killed Italian song, but now a new danger had arisen,—

> "*Humour and Wit, in each politer Age,*
> *Triumphant, rear'd the Trophies of the Stage:*
> *But only Farce, and Shew, will now go down,*
> *And* Harlequin's *the Darling of the Town.*"

As if to confirm his friend's opinion, Fielding's next piece combined the popular ingredients above referred to. In March following he produced at the Haymarket, under the pseudonym of Scriblerus Secundus, *The Author's Farce*, with a "Puppet Show" called *The Pleasures of the Town*. In the Puppet Show, Henley, the Clare-Market Orator, and Samuel Johnson, the quack author of the popular *Hurlothrumbo*, were smartly satirised, as also was the fashionable craze for Opera and Pantomime. But the most enduring part of this odd

medley is the farce which occupies the two first acts, and under thin disguises no doubt depicts much which was within the writer's experience. At all events, Luckless, the author in the play, has more than one of the characteristics which distinguish the traditional portrait of Fielding himself in his early years. He wears a laced coat, is in love, writes plays, and cannot pay his landlady, who declares, with some show of justice, that she "would no more depend on a Benefit-Night of an un-acted Play, than she wou'd on a Benefit-Ticket in an un-drawn Lottery." "Her Floor (she laments) is all spoil'd with Ink—her Windows with Verses, and her Door has been almost beat down with Duns." But the most humorous scenes in the play—scenes really admirable in their ironic delineation of the seamy side of authorship in 1730—are those in which Mr. Bookweight, the publisher—the Curll or Osborne of the period—is shown surrounded by the obedient hacks, who feed at his table on "good Milk-porridge, very often twice a Day," and manufacture the murders, ghost-stories, political pamphlets, and translations from Virgil (out of Dryden) with which he supplies his customers. Here is one of them as good as any :—

"*Bookweight.* So, Mr. *Index*, what News with you?

Index. I have brought my Bill, Sir.

Book. What's here?—for fitting the Motto of *Risum teneatis Amici* to a dozen Pamphlets at Sixpence per each, Six Shillings—For *Omnia vincit Amor, & nos cedamus Amori*, Sixpence—For *Difficile est Satyram non scribere*, Sixpence—Hum! hum! hum! Sum total, for Thirty-six *Latin* Motto's, Eighteen Shillings; ditto *English*, One Shilling and Ninepence; ditto *Greek*, Four, Four Shillings. These *Greek* Motto's are excessively dear.

Ind. If you have them cheaper at either of the Universities, I will give you mine for nothing.

Book. You shall have your Money immediately, and pray remember that I must have two *Latin* Seditious Motto's and one *Greek* Moral Motto for Pamphlets by to-morrow Morning. . . .

Ind. Sir, I shall provide them. Be pleas'd to look on that, Sir, and print me Five hundred Proposals, and as many Receipts.

Book. Proposals for printing by Subscription a new Translation of Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods and his Tusculan Questions*, by *Jeremy Index*, Esq. ; I am sorry you have undertaken this, for it prevents a Design of mine.

Ind. Indeed, Sir, it does not, for you see all of the Book that I ever intend to publish. It is only a handsome Way of asking one's Friends for a Guinea.

Book. Then you have not translated a Word of it, perhaps.

Ind. Not a single Syllable.

Book. Well, you shall have your Proposals forthwith ; but I desire you wou'd be a little more reasonable in your Bills for the future, or I shall deal with you no longer ; for I have a certain Fellow of a College, who offers to furnish me with Second-hand Motto's out of the *Spectator* for Two-pence each.

Ind. Sir, I only desire to live by my Goods, and I hope you will be pleas'd to allow some difference between a neat fresh Piece, piping hot out of the Classicks, and old thread-bare worn-out Stuff that has past thro' ev'ry Pedant's Mouth. . . ."

The latter part of this amusing dialogue, referring to Mr. Index's translation from Cicero, was added in an amended version of the *Author's Farce*, which appeared some years later, and in which Fielding depicts the portrait of another all-powerful personage in the literary life,—the actor-manager. This, however, will be more conveniently treated under its proper date, and it is only necessary to say here that the slight sketches of Marplay and

Sparkish given in the first edition, were presumably intended for Cibber and Wilks, with whom, notwithstanding the "civil and kind Behaviour" for which he had thanked them in the "Preface" to *Love in Several Masques*, the young dramatist was now, it seems, at war. In the introduction to the *Miscellanies*, he refers to "a slight Pique" with Wilks; and it is not impossible that the key to the difference may be found in the following passage:—

"*Sparkish.* What dost think of the Play?

Marplay. It may be a very good one, for ought I know; *but I know the Author has no Interest.*

Spark. Give me Interest, and rat the Play.

Mar. Rather rat the Play which has no Interest. Interest sways as much in the Theatre as at Court.—And you know it is not always the Companion of Merit in either."

The handsome student from Leyden—the potential Congreve who wrote *Love in Several Masques*, and had Lady Mary Wortley Montagu for patroness, might fairly be supposed to have expectations which warranted the civilities of Messrs. Wilks and Cibber; but the "Luckless" of two years later had probably convinced them that his dramatic performances did not involve their *sine qua non* of success. Under these circumstances nothing perhaps could be more natural than that they should play their parts in his little satire.

We have dwelt at some length upon the *Author's Farce*, because it is the first of Fielding's plays in which, leaving the "wit-traps" of Wycherley and Congreve, he deals with the direct censure of contemporary folly, and because, apart from translation and adaptation, it is in this field that his most brilliant theatrical successes were

won. For the next few years he continued to produce comedies and farces with great rapidity, both under his own name, and under the pseudonym of Scriblerus Secundus. Most of these show manifest signs of haste, and some are recklessly immodest. We shall confine ourselves to one or two of the best, and do little more than enumerate the others. Of these latter, the *Coffee-House Politician; or, The Justice caught in his own Trap*, 1730, succeeded the *Author's Farce*. The leading idea, that of a tradesman who neglects his shop for "foreign affairs," appears to be derived from Addison's excellent character-sketch in the *Tatler* of the "Political Upholsterer." This is the more likely, in that Arne the musician, whose father is generally supposed to have been Addison's original, was Fielding's contemporary at Eton. Justice Squeezum, another character contained in this play, is a kind of first draft of the later Justice Thrasher in *Amelia*. The representation of the trading justice on the stage, however, was by no means new, since Justice Quorum in Coffey's *Beggar's Wedding* (with whom, as will appear presently, Fielding's name has been erroneously associated) exhibits similar characteristics. Omitting for the moment the burlesque of *Tom Thumb*, the *Coffee-House Politician* was followed by the *Letter Writers; or, A new Way to Keep a Wife at Home*, 1731, a brisk little farce, with one vigorously drawn character, that of Jack Commons, a young university rake; the *Grub-Street Opera*, 1731; the farce of the *Lottery*, 1731, in which the famous Mrs. Clive, then Miss Raftor, appeared; the *Modern Husband*, 1732; the *Covent Garden Tragedy*, 1732, a broad and rather riotous burlesque of Ambrose Philips' *Distrest Mother;* and the *Debauchees; or, The Jesuit Caught*, 1732—which

was based upon the then debated story of Father Girard and Catherine Cadière.

Neither of the two last-named pieces is worthy of the author, and their strongest condemnation in our day is that they were condemned in their own for their unbridled license, the *Grub Street Journal* going so far as to say that they had "met with the universal detestation of the Town." The *Modern Husband*, which turns on that most loathsome of all commercial pursuits, the traffic of a husband in his wife's dishonour, appears, oddly enough, to have been regarded by its author with especial complacency. Its prologue lays stress upon the moral purpose; it was dedicated to Sir Robert Walpole; and from a couple of letters printed in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Correspondence*, it is clear that it had been submitted to her perusal. It had, however, no great success upon the stage, and the chief thing worth remembering about it is that it afforded his last character to Wilks, who played the part of Bellamant. That "slight Pique," of which mention has been made, was no doubt by this time a thing of the past.

But if most of the works in the foregoing list can hardly be regarded as creditable to Fielding's artistic or moral sense, one of them at least deserves to be excepted, and that is the burlesque of *Tom Thumb*. This was first brought out in 1730 at the little theatre in the Haymarket, where it met with a favourable reception. In the following year it was enlarged to three acts (in the first version there had been but two), and reproduced at the same theatre as the *Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*, "with the Annotations of H. Scriblerus Secundus." It is certainly one

of the best burlesques ever written. As Baker observes in his *Biographia Dramatica*, it may fairly be ranked as a sequel to Buckingham's *Rehearsal*, since it includes the absurdities of nearly all the writers of tragedies from the period when that piece stops to 1730. Among the authors satirised are Nat. Lee, Thomson (whose famous

"O Sophonisba, Sophonisba, O!"

is parodied by

"O Huncamunca, Huncamunca, O!"),

Banks's *Earl of Essex*, a favourite play at Bartholomew Fair, the *Busiris* of Young, and the *Aurengzebe* of Dryden, etc. The annotations, which abound in transparent references to Dr. B[*entle*]y, Mr. T[*heobal*]d, Mr. D[*enni*]s, are excellent imitations of contemporary pedantry. One example, elicited in Act 1 by a reference to "giants," must stand for many:—

"That learned Historian Mr. S——n in the third Number of his Criticism on our Author, takes great Pains to explode this Passage. It is, says he, difficult to guess what Giants are here meant, unless the Giant *Despair* in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, or the giant *Greatness* in the *Royal Villain;* for I have heard of no other sort of Giants in the Reign of King *Arthur*. *Petrus Burmanus* makes three *Tom Thumbs*, one whereof he supposes to have been the same Person whom the *Greeks* called *Hercules*, and that by these Giants are to be understood the *Centaurs* slain by that Heroe. Another *Tom Thumb* he contends to have been no other than the *Hermes Trismegistus* of the Antients. The third *Tom Thumb* he places under the Reign of King *Arthur;* to which third *Tom Thumb*, says he, the Actions of the other two were attributed. Now, tho' I know that this Opinion is supported by an Assertion of *Justus Lipsius*, *Thomam illum Thumbum non alium quam*

Herculem fuisse satis constat; yet shall I venture to oppose one Line of Mr. *Midwinter*, against them all,

In Arthurs' *Court* Tom Thumb *did live.*

"But then, says Dr. *B——y*, if we place *Tom Thumb* in the Court of King *Arthur*, it will be proper to place that Court out of *Britain*, where no Giants were ever heard of. *Spencer*, in his *Fairy Queen*, is of another Opinion, where describing *Albion*, he says,

Far within, a salvage Nation dwelt
Of hideous Giants.

And in the same canto:

Then Elfar, *with two Brethren Giants had*
The one of which had two Heads,—
The other three.

Risum teneatis, Amici."

Of the play itself it is difficult to give an idea by extract, as nearly every line travesties some tragic passage once familiar to play-goers, and now utterly forgotten. But the following lines from one of the speeches of Lord Grizzle—a part admirably acted by Liston in later years[1]—are a fair specimen of its ludicrous use (or rather abuse) of simile:—

"Yet think not long, I will my Rival bear,
Or unreveng'd the slighted Willow wear;
The gloomy, brooding Tempest now confin'd,
Within the hollow Caverns of my Mind,
In dreadful Whirl, shall rowl along the Coasts,
Shall thin the Land of all the Men it boasts,
And cram up ev'ry Chink of Hell with Ghosts.
So have I seen, in some dark Winter's Day,
A sudden Storm rush down the Sky's High-Way,
Sweep thro' the Streets with terrible ding-dong,
Gush thro' the Spouts, and wash whole Crowds along.

[1] Compare Hazlitt, *On the Comic Writers of the Last Century.*

The crowded Shops, the thronging Vermin skreen,
Together cram the Dirty and the Clean,
And not one Shoe-Boy in the Street is seen."

In the modern version of Kane O'Hara, to which songs were added, the *Tragedy of Tragedies* still keeps, or kept the stage. But its crowning glory is its traditional connection with Swift, who told Mrs. Pilkington that he "had not laugh'd above twice" in his life, once at the tricks of a merry-andrew, and again when (in Fielding's burlesque) Tom Thumb killed the ghost. This is an incident of the earlier versions, omitted in deference to the critics, for which the reader will seek vainly in the play as now printed; and he will, moreover, discover that Mrs. Pilkington's memory served her imperfectly, since it is not Tom Thumb who kills the ghost, but the ghost of Tom Thumb which is killed by his jealous rival, Lord Grizzle. A trifling inaccuracy of this sort, however, is rather in favour of the truth of the story than against it, for a pure fiction would in all probability have been more precise. Another point of interest in connection with this burlesque is the frontispiece which Hogarth supplied to the edition of 1731. It has no special value as a design, but it constitutes the earliest reference to that friendship with the painter, of which so many traces are to be found in Fielding's works.

Hitherto Fielding had succeeded best in burlesque. But, in 1732, the same year in which he produced the *Modern Husband*, the *Debauchees*, and the *Covent Garden Tragedy*, he made an adaptation of Molière's *Médecin malgré lui*, which had already been imitated in English by Mrs. Centlivre and others. This little piece, to which he gave the title of the *Mock-Doctor; or, The Dumb Lady*

cur'd, was well received. The French original was rendered with tolerable closeness; but here and there Fielding has introduced little touches of his own, as, for instance, where Gregory (Sganarelle) tells his wife Dorcas (Martine), whom he has just been beating, that as they are but one, whenever he beats her he beats half of himself. To this she replies by requesting that for the future he will beat the other half. An entire scene (the thirteenth) was also added at the desire of Miss Raftor, who played Dorcas, and thought her part too short. This is apparently intended as a burlesque of the notorious quack Misaubin, to whom the *Mock-Doctor* was ironically dedicated. He was the proprietor of a famous pill, and was introduced by Hogarth into the *Harlot's Progress*. Gregory was played by Theophilus Cibber, and the preface contains a complimentary reference to his acting, and the expected retirement of his father from the stage. Neither Genest nor Lawrence gives the date when the piece was first produced, but if the "April" on the dubious author's benefit ticket attributed to Hogarth be correct, it must have been in the first months of 1732.

The cordial reception of the *Mock-Doctor* seems to have encouraged Fielding to make further levies upon Molière, and he speaks of his hope to do so in the "Preface." As a matter of fact, he produced a version of *L'Avare* at Drury Lane in the following year, which entirely outshone the older versions of Shadwell and Ozell, and gained from Voltaire the praise of having added to the original "*quelques beautés de dialogue particulières à sâ* (Fielding's) *nation*." Lovegold, its leading *rôle*, became a stock part. It was well played by its first actor Griffin,

and was a favourite exercise with Macklin, Shuter, and (in our own days) Phelps.

In February 1733, when the *Miser* was first acted, Fielding was five and twenty. His means at this time were, in all probability, exceedingly uncertain. The small proportion of money due to him at his mother's death had doubtless been long since exhausted, and he must have been almost wholly dependent upon the precarious profits of his pen. That he was assisted by rich and noble friends to any material extent appears, in spite of Murphy, to be unlikely. At all events, an occasional dedication to the Duke of Richmond or the Earl of Chesterfield cannot be regarded as proof positive. Lyttelton, who certainly befriended him in later life, was for a great part of this period absent on the Grand Tour, and Ralph Allen had not yet come forward. In default of the always deferred allowance, his father's house at Salisbury (?) was no doubt open to him; and it is plain, from indications in his minor poems, that he occasionally escaped into the country. But in London he lived for the most part, and probably not very worshipfully. What, even now, would be the life of a young man of Fielding's age, fond of pleasure, careless of the future, very liberally equipped with high spirits, and straightway exposed to the perilous seductions of the stage? Fielding had the defects of his qualities, and was no better than the rest of those about him. He was manly, and frank, and generous; but these characteristics could scarcely protect him from the terrors of the tip-staff, and the sequels of "t'other bottle." Indeed, he very honestly and unfeignedly confesses to the lapses of his youth in the *Journey from this World to the Next*, adding

that he pretended "to very little Virtue more than general Philanthropy and private Friendship." It is therefore but reasonable to infer that his daily life must have been more than usually characterised by the vicissitudes of the eighteenth-century prodigal,—alternations from the "Rose" to a Clare-Market ordinary, from gold-lace to fustian, from champagne to "British Burgundy." In a rhymed petition to Walpole, dated 1730, he makes pleasant mirth of what no doubt was sometimes sober truth—his debts, his duns, and his dinnerless condition He (the verses tell us)

> "—— from his Garret can look down
> On the whole Street of *Arlington*." [1]

Again—

> "The Family that dines the latest
> Is in our Street esteem'd the greatest;
> But latest Hours must surely fall
> Before him who ne'er dines at all;"

and

> "This too doth in my Favour speak,
> Your Levée is but twice a Week;
> From mine I can exclude but one Day,
> My Door is quiet on a *Sunday*."

When he can admit so much even jestingly of himself, it is but legitimate to presume that there is no great exaggeration in the portrait of him in 1735, by the anonymous satirist of *Seasonable Reproof*:—

> "*F*——*g*, who *yesterday* appear'd so rough,
> Clad in *coarse Frize*, and plaister'd down with *Snuff*,
> See how his *Instant* gaudy Trappings shine;
> What *Play-house* Bard was ever seen so fine!
> But this, not from his *Humour* flows, you'll say,

[1] Where Sir Robert lived.

But mere *Necessity*;—for last Night lay
In *Pawn*, the *Velvet* which he wears to Day."

His work bears traces of the inequalities and irregularities of his mode of living. Although in certain cases (*e.g.* the revised edition of *Tom Thumb*) the artist and scholar seems to have spasmodically asserted himself, the majority of his plays were hasty and ill-considered performances, most of which (as Lady Mary said) he would have thrown into the fire "if meat could have been got without money, and money without scribbling." "When he had contracted to bring on a play, or a farce," says Murphy, "it is well known, by many of his friends now living, that he would go home rather late from a tavern, and would, the next morning, deliver a scene to the players, written upon the papers which had wrapped the tobacco, in which he so much delighted." It is not easy to conceive, unless Fielding's capacities as a smoker were unusual, that any large contribution to dramatic literature could have been made upon the wrappings of Virginia or Freeman's Best; but that his reputation for careless production was established among his contemporaries is manifest from the following passage in a burlesque *Author's Will* published in the *Universal Spectator* of Oldys:—

"*Item*, I give and bequeath to my very *negligent* Friend *Henry Drama*, Esq., all my INDUSTRY. And whereas the World may think this an unnecessary Legacy, forasmuch as the said *Henry Drama*, Esq., brings on the Stage *four Pieces* every Season; yet as such Pieces are always wrote with uncommon *Rapidity*, and during such fatal Intervals only as the *Stocks* have been on the *Fall*, this Legacy will be of use to him to revise and correct his Works. Furthermore, for fear the said *Henry Drama* should make an ill Use of the

said *Industry*, and expend it all on a *Ballad Farce*, it's my Will the said Legacy should be paid him by equal Portions, and as his Necessities may require."

There can be little doubt that the above quotation, which is reprinted in the *Gentleman's* for July 1734, and seems to have hitherto escaped inquiry, refers to none other than the "very negligent" Author of the *Modern Husband* and the *Old Debauchees*—in other words, to Henry Fielding.

CHAPTER II.

MORE PLAYS—MARRIAGE—THE LICENSING ACT.

THE very subordinate part in the *Miser* of "Furnish, an Upholsterer," was taken by a third-rate actor, whose surname has been productive of no little misconception among Henry Fielding's biographers. This was Timothy Fielding, sometime member of the Haymarket and Drury Lane companies, and proprietor, for several successive years, of a booth at Bartholomew, Southwark, and other fairs. In the absence of any Christian name, Mr. Lawrence seems to have rather rashly concluded that the Fielding mentioned by Genest as having a booth at Bartholomew Fair in 1733 with Hippisley (the original Peachum of the *Beggar's Opera*), was Fielding the dramatist; and the mistake thus originated at once began that prosperous course which usually awaits any slip of the kind. It misled one notoriously careful inquirer, who, in his interesting chronicles of Bartholomew Fair, minutely investigated the actor's history, giving precise details of his doings at "Bartlemy" from 1728 to 1736; but, although the theory involved obvious inconsistencies, apparently without any suspicion that the proprietor of the booth which stood, season after season, in the yard of the George Inn at Smithfield, was an

entirely different person from his greater namesake. The late Dr. Rimbault carried the story farther still, and attempted to show, in *Notes and Queries* for May 1859, that Henry Fielding had a booth at Tottenham Court in 1738, "subsequent to his admission into the Middle Temple;" and he also promised to supply additional particulars to the effect that even 1738 was not the "*last* year of Fielding's career as a booth-proprietor." At this stage (probably for good reasons) inquiry seems to have slumbered, although, with the fatal vitality of error, the statement continued (and still continues) to be repeated in various quarters. In 1875, however, Mr. Frederick Latreille published a short article in *Notes and Queries*, proving conclusively, by extracts from contemporary newspapers and other sources, that the Timothy Fielding above referred to was the real Fielding of the fairs; that he became landlord of the Buffalo Tavern "at the corner of Bloomsbury Square" in 1733; and that he died in August 1738, his christian name, so often suppressed, being duly recorded in the register of the neighbouring church of St. George's, where he was buried. The admirers of our great novelist owe Mr. Latreille a debt of gratitude for this opportune discovery. It is true that a certain element of Bohemian picturesqueness is lost to Henry Fielding's life, already not very rich in recorded incident; and it would certainly have been curious if he, who ended his days in trying to dignify the judicial office, should have begun life by acting the part of a "trading justice," namely that of Quorum in Coffey's *Beggar's Wedding*, which Timothy Fielding had played at Drury Lane. But, on the whole, it is satisfactory to know that his early experiences did not,

of necessity, include those of a strolling player. Some obscure and temporary connection with Bartholomew Fair he may have had, as Smollett, in the scurrilous pamphlet issued in 1742, makes him say that he blew a trumpet there in quality of herald to a collection of wild beasts; but this is probably no more than an earlier and uglier form of the apparition laid by Mr. Latreille. The only positive evidence of any connection between Henry Fielding and the Smithfield carnival is, that Theophilus Cibber's company played the *Miser* at their booth in August 1733.

With the exception of the *Miser* and an afterpiece, never printed, entitled *Deborah; or, A Wife for you all*, which was acted for Miss Raftor's benefit in April 1733, nothing important was brought upon the stage by Fielding until January of the following year, when he produced the *Intriguing Chambermaid*, and a revised version of the *Author's Farce*. By a succession of changes, which it is impossible here to describe in detail, considerable alterations had taken place in the management of Drury Lane. In the first place, Wilks was dead, and his share in the Patent was represented by his widow. Booth also was dead, and Mrs. Booth had sold her share to Giffard of Goodman's Fields, while the elder Cibber had retired. At the beginning of the season of 1733-34 the leading patentee was an amateur called Highmore, who had purchased Cibber's share. He had also purchased part of Booth's share before his death in May 1733. The only other shareholder of importance was Mrs. Wilks. Shortly after the opening of the theatre in September, the greater part of the Drury Lane Company, led by the younger Cibber, revolted

from Highmore and Mrs. Wilks, and set up for themselves. Matters were farther complicated by the fact that John Rich had not long opened a new theatre in Covent Garden, which constituted a fresh attraction; and that what Fielding called the "wanton affected Fondness for foreign Musick," was making the Italian opera a dangerous rival—the more so as it was patronised by the nobility. Without actors, the patentees were in serious case. Miss Raftor, who about this time became Mrs. Clive, appears, however, to have remained faithful to them, as also did Henry Fielding. The lively little comedy of the *Intriguing Chambermaid* was adapted from Regnard especially for her; and in its published form was preceded by an epistle in which the dramatist dwells upon the "Factions and Divisions among the Players," and compliments her upon her compassionate adherence to Mr. Highmore and Mrs. Wilks in their time of need. The epistle is also valuable for its warm and generous testimony to the private character of this accomplished actress, whose part in real life, says Fielding, was that of "the best Wife, the best Daughter, the best Sister, and the best Friend." The words are more than mere compliment; they appear to have been true. Madcap and humourist as she was, no breath of slander seems ever to have tarnished the reputation of Kitty Clive, whom Johnson—a fine judge, when his prejudices were not actively aroused—called in addition "the best player that he ever saw."

The *Intriguing Chambermaid* was produced on the 15th of January 1734. Lettice, from whom the piece was named, was well personated by Mrs. Clive, and Colonel Bluff by Macklin, the only actor of any promise that

Highmore had been able to secure. With the new comedy the *Author's Farce* was revived. It would be unnecessary to refer to this again, but for the additions that were made to it. These consisted chiefly in the substitution of Marplay Junior for Sparkish, the actor-manager of the first version. The death of Wilks may have been a reason for this alteration; but a stronger was no doubt the desire to throw ridicule upon Theophilus Cibber, whose behaviour in deserting Drury Lane immediately after his father had sold his share to Highmore had not passed without censure, nor had his father's action escaped sarcastic comment. Theophilus Cibber—whose best part was Beaumont and Fletcher's Copper Captain, and who carried the impersonation into private life—had played in several of Fielding's pieces; but Fielding had linked his fortunes to those of the patentees, and was consequently against the players in this quarrel. The following scene was accordingly added to the farce for the exclusive benefit of "Young Marplay":—

"*Marplay junior.* Mr. *Luckless*, I kiss your Hands—Sir, I am your most obedient humble Servant; you see, Mr. *Luckless*, what Power you have over me. I attend your Commands, tho' several Persons of Quality have staid at Court for me above this Hour.

Luckless. I am obliged to you—I have a Tragedy for your House, Mr. *Marplay.*

Mar. jun. Ha! if you will send it me, I will give you my Opinion of it; and if I can make any Alterations in it that will be for its Advantage, I will do it freely.

Witmore. Alterations, Sir?

Mar. jun. Yes, Sir, Alterations—I will maintain it, let a Play be never so good, without Alteration it will do nothing.

Wit. Very odd indeed.

Mar. jun. Did you ever write, Sir?

Wit. No, Sir, I thank Heav'n.

Mar. jun. Oh! your humble Servant—your very humble Servant, Sir. When you write yourself you will find the Necessity of Alterations. Why, Sir, wou'd you guess that I had alter'd *Shakespear?*

Wit. Yes, faith, Sir, no one sooner.

Mar. jun. Alack-a-day! Was you to see the Plays when they are brought to us—a Parcel of crude, undigested Stuff. We are the Persons, Sir, who lick them into Form, that mould them into Shape—The Poet make the Play indeed! The Colour-man might be as well said to make the Picture, or the Weaver the Coat: My Father and I, Sir, are a Couple of poetical Tailors; when a Play is brought us, we consider it as a Tailor does his Coat, we cut it, Sir, we cut it: And let me tell you, we have the exact Measure of the Town, we know how to fit their Taste. The Poets, between you and me, are a Pack of ignorant——

Wit. Hold, hold, sir. This is not quite so civil to Mr. *Luckless:* Besides, as I take it, you have done the Town the Honour of writing yourself.

Mar. jun. Sir, you are a Man of Sense; and express yourself well. I did, as you say, once make a small Sally into *Parnassus*, took a sort of flying Leap over *Helicon:* But if ever they catch me there again—Sir, the Town have a Prejudice to my Family; for if any Play cou'd have made them ashamed to damn it, mine must. It was all over Plot. It wou'd have made half a dozen Novels: Nor was it cram'd with a pack of Wit-traps, like *Congreve* and *Wycherly*, where every one knows when the Joke was coming. I defy the sharpest Critick of 'em all to know when any Jokes of mine were coming. The Dialogue was plain, easy, and natural, and not one single Joke in it from the Beginning to the End: Besides, Sir, there was one Scene of tender melancholy Conversation, enough to have melted a Heart of Stone; and yet they damn'd it: And they damn'd themselves; for they shall have no more of mine.

Wit. Take pity on the Town, Sir.

Mar. jun. I! No, Sir, no. I'll write no more. No more; unless I am forc'd to it.

Luckless. That's no easy thing, *Marplay.*

Mar. jun. Yes, Sir. Odes, Odes, a Man may be oblig'd to write those you know."

These concluding lines plainly refer to the elder Cibber's appointment as Laureate in 1730, and to those "annual Birth-day Strains," with which he so long delighted the irreverent; while the alteration of Shakespeare and the cobbling of plays generally, satirised again in a later scene, are strictly in accordance with contemporary accounts of the manners and customs of the two dictators of Drury Lane. The piece indicated by Marplay Junior was probably Theophilus Cibber's *Lover*, which had been produced in January 1731 with very moderate success.

After the *Intriguing Chambermaid* and the revived *Author's Farce*, Fielding seems to have made farther exertions for "the distressed Actors in Drury Lane." He had always been an admirer of Cervantes, frequent references to whose master-work are to be found scattered through his plays; and he now busied himself with completing and expanding the loose scenes of the comedy of *Don Quixote in England*, which (as before stated) he had sketched at Leyden for his own diversion. He had already thought of bringing it upon the stage, but had been dissuaded from doing so by Cibber and Booth, who regarded it as wanting in novelty. Now, however, he strengthened it by the addition of some election scenes, in which—he tells Lord Chesterfield in the dedication—he designed to give a lively representation of "the Calamities brought on a Country by general Corruption;" and it was duly rehearsed. But unexpected delays took place in its production;

the revolted players returned to Drury Lane; and, lest the actors' benefits should further retard its appearance by postponing it until the winter season, Fielding transferred it to the Haymarket, where, according to Geneste, it was acted in April 1734. As a play, *Don Quixote in England* has few stage qualities and no plot to speak of. But the Don with his whimsies, and Sancho with his appetite and string of proverbs, are conceived in something of the spirit of Cervantes. Squire Badger, too, a rudimentary Squire Western, well represented by Macklin, is vigorously drawn; and the song of his huntsman Scut, beginning with the fine line "The dusky Night rides down the Sky," has a verse that recalls a practice of which Addison accuses Sir Roger de Coverley:—

> "*A brushing Fox in yonder Wood,*
> *Secure to find we seek;*
> *For why, I carry'd sound and good,*
> *A Cartload there last Week.*
> And a Hunting we will go."

The election scenes, though but slightly attached to the main story, are keenly satirical, and considering that Hogarth's famous series of kindred prints belongs to a much later date, must certainly have been novel, as may be gathered from the following little colloquy between Mr. Mayor and Messrs. Guzzle and Retail:—

> "*Mayor (to Retail).* . . . I like an Opposition, because otherwise a Man may be oblig'd to vote against his Party; therefore when we invite a Gentleman to stand, we invite him to spend his Money for the Honour of his Party; and when both Parties have spent as much as they are able, every honest Man will vote according to his Conscience.

Guz. Mr. Mayor talks like a Man of Sense and Honour, and it does me good to hear him.

May. Ay, ay, Mr. *Guzzle*, I never gave a Vote contrary to my Conscience. I have very earnestly recommended the Country-Interest to all my Brethren: But before that, I recommended the Town-Interest, that is, the interest of this Corporation; and first of all I recommended to every particular Man to take a particular Care of himself. And it is with a certain way of Reasoning, That he who serves me best, will serve the Town best; and he that serves the Town best, will serve the Country best."

In the January and February of 1735 Fielding produced two more pieces at Drury Lane, a farce and a five-act comedy. The farce—a lively trifle enough—was *An Old Man taught Wisdom*, a title subsequently changed to the *Virgin Unmasked*. It was obviously written to display the talents of Mrs. Clive, who played in it her favourite character of a hoyden, and, after "interviewing" a number of suitors chosen by her father, finally ran away with Thomas the footman—a course in those days not without its parallel in high life, above stairs as well as below. It appears to have succeeded, though Bookish, one of the characters, was entirely withdrawn in deference to some disapprobation on the part of the audience; while the part of Wormwood, a lawyer, which is found in the latest editions, is said to have been "omitted in representation." The comedy, entitled *The Universal Gallant; or, The different Husbands*, was scarcely so fortunate. Notwithstanding that Quin, who, after an absence of many years, had returned to Drury Lane, played a leading part, and that Theophilus Cibber in the hero, Captain Smart, seems to have been fitted with a character exactly suited to his talents and idiosyncrasy,

the play ran no more than three nights. Till the third act was almost over, "the *Audience*," says the *Prompter* (as quoted by "Sylvanus Urban"), "sat quiet, in hopes it would mend, till finding it grew *worse* and *worse*, they lost all Patience, and not an *Expression* or *Sentiment* afterwards pass'd without its deserved *Censure*." Perhaps it is not to be wondered at that the author—"the prolifick *Mr. Fielding*," as the *Prompter* calls him, attributed its condemnation to causes other than its lack of interest. In his *Advertisement* he openly complains of the "cruel Usage" his "poor Play" had met with, and of the barbarity of the young men about town who made "a Jest of damning Plays"—a pastime which, whether it prevailed in this case or not, no doubt existed, as Sarah Fielding afterwards refers to it in *David Simple*. If an author—he goes on to say—"be so unfortunate [*as*] to depend on the success of his Labours for his Bread, he must be an inhuman Creature indeed, who would out of sport and wantonness prevent a Man from getting a Livelihood in an honest and inoffensive Way, and make a jest of starving him and his Family." The plea is a good one if the play is good; but if not, it is worthless. In this respect the public are like the French Cardinal in the story; and when the famished writer's work fails to entertain them, they are fully justified in doubting his *raison d'être*. There is no reason for supposing that the *Universal Gallant* deserved a better fate than it met with.

Judging from the time which elapsed between the production of this play and that of *Pasquin* (Fielding's next theatrical venture), it has been conjectured that the interval was occupied by his marriage, and brief experience as a Dorsetshire country gentleman. The exact

date of his marriage is not known, though it is generally assumed to have taken place in the beginning of 1735. But it may well have been earlier, for it will be observed that in the above quotation from the Preface to the *Universal Gallant*, which is dated from "Buckingham Street, Feb. 12," he indirectly speaks of "his family." This, it is true, may be no more than the pious fraud of a bachelor; but if it be taken literally, we must conclude that his marriage was already so far a thing of the past that he was already a father. This supposition would account for the absence of any record of the birth of a child during his forthcoming residence at East Stour, by the explanation that it had already happened in London; and it is not impossible that the entry of the marriage, too, may be hidden away in some obscure Metropolitan parish register, since those of Salisbury have been fruitlessly searched. At this distance of time, however, speculation is fruitless; and, in default of more definite information, the "spring of 1735," which Keightley gives, must be accepted as the probable date of the marriage.

Concerning the lady, the particulars are more precise. She was a Miss Charlotte Cradock, one of three sisters living upon their own means at Salisbury, or—as it was then styled—New Sarum. Mr. Keightley's personal inquiries, *circa* 1858, elicited the information that the family, now extinct, was highly respectable, but not of New Sarum's best society. Richardson, in one of his malevolent outbursts, asserted that the sisters were illegitimate; but, says the writer above referred to, "of this circumstance we have no other proof, and I am able to add that the tradition of Salisbury knows nothing of it."

They were, however, celebrated for their personal attractions; and if the picture given in chap. ii. book iv. of *Tom Jones* accurately represents the first Mrs. Fielding, she must have been a most charming brunette. Something of the stereotyped characteristics of a novelist's heroine obviously enter into the description; but the luxuriant black hair, which, cut "to comply with the modern Fashion," "curled so gracefully in her Neck," the lustrous eyes, the dimple in the right cheek, the chin rather full than small, and the complexion having "more of the Lilly than of the Rose," but flushing with exercise or modesty, are, doubtless, accurately set down. In speaking of the nose as "exactly regular," Fielding appears to have deviated slightly from the truth; for we learn from Lady Louisa Stuart that, in this respect, Miss Cradock's appearance had "suffered a little" from an accident mentioned in book ii. of *Amelia*, the overturning of a chaise. Whether she also possessed the mental qualities and accomplishments which fell to the lot of Sophia Western, we have no means of determining; but Lady Stuart is again our authority for saying that she was as amiable as she was handsome.

From the love-poems in the first volume of the *Miscellanies* of 1743—poems which their author declares to have been "Productions of the Heart rather than of the Head"—it is clear that Fielding had been attached to his future wife for several years previous to 1735. One of them, *Advice to the Nymphs of New S——m*, celebrates the charms of Celia — the poetical equivalent for Charlotte — as early as 1730; another, containing a reference to the player Anthony Boheme, who died in 1731, was probably written at the same time; while a

third, in which, upon the special intervention of Jove himself, the prize of beauty is decreed by Venus to the Salisbury sisters, may be of an earlier date than any. The year 1730 was the year of his third piece, the *Author's Farce*, and he must therefore have been paying his addresses to Miss Cradock not very long after his arrival in London. This is a fact to be borne in mind. So early an attachment to a good and beautiful girl, living no farther off than Salisbury, where his own father probably resided, is scarcely consistent with the reckless dissipation which has been laid to his charge, although, on his own showing, he was by no means faultless. But it is a part of natures like his to exaggerate their errors in the moment of repentance; and it may well be that Henry Fielding, too, was not so black as he painted himself. Of his love-verses he says—"this Branch of Writing is what I very little pretend to;" and it would be misleading to rate them highly, for, unlike his literary descendant, Mr. Thackeray, he never attained to any special quality of note. But some of his octosyllabics, if they cannot be called equal to Prior's, fall little below Swift's. "I hate"—cries he in one of the pieces,

> "I hate the Town, and all its Ways;
> Ridotto's, Opera's, and Plays;
> The Ball, the Ring, the Mall, the Court;
> Wherever the Beau-Monde resort . . .
> All Coffee-Houses, and their Praters;
> All Courts of Justice, and Debaters;
> All Taverns, and the Sots within 'em;
> All Bubbles, and the Rogues that skin 'em,"

—and so forth, the natural anti-climax being that he loves nothing but his "Charmer" at Salisbury. In an-

other, which is headed *To Celia.—Occasioned by her apprehending her House would be broke open, and having an old Fellow to guard it, who sat up all Night, with a Gun without any Ammunition*, and from which it has been concluded that the Miss Cradocks were their own landlords, Venus chides Cupid for neglecting to guard her favourite :—

> "'Come tell me, Urchin, tell no lies ;
> Where was you hid, in *Vince's* eyes ?
> Did you fair *Bennet's* Breast importune ?
> (I know you dearly love a Fortune.)'
> Poor *Cupid* now began to whine ;
> 'Mamma, it was no Fault of mine.
> I in a Dimple lay *perdue*,
> That little Guard-Room chose by you.
> A hundred Loves (all arm'd) did grace
> The Beauties of her Neck and Face ;
> Thence, by a Sigh I dispossest,
> Was blown to *Harry Fielding's* Breast ;
> Where I was forc'd all Night to stay,
> Because I could not find my Way.
> But did Mamma know there what Work
> I've made, how acted like a Turk;
> What Pains, what Torment he endures,
> Which no Physician ever cures,
> She would forgive.' The Goddess smil'd,
> And gently chuck'd her wicked Child,
> Bid him go back, and take more Care,
> And give her Service to the Fair."

Swift, in his *Rhapsody on Poetry*, 1733, coupled Fielding with Leonard Welsted as an instance of sinking in verse. But the foregoing, which he could not have seen, is scarcely, if at all, inferior to his own *Birthday Poems to Stella*.[1]

[1] Swift afterwards substituted "the laureate [Cibber]' for "Fielding," and appears to have changed his mind as to the latter's merits. "I can assure Mr. *Fielding*," says Mrs. Pilkington in the

The history of Fielding's marriage rests so exclusively upon the statements of Arthur Murphy that it will be well to quote his words in full :—

"Mr. Fielding had not been long a writer for the stage, when he married Miss Craddock [*sic*], a beauty from Salisbury. About that time, his mother dying, a moderate estate, at Stower in Dorsetshire, devolved to him. To that place he retired with his wife, on whom he doated, with a resolution to bid adieu to all the follies and intemperances to which he had addicted himself in the career of a town-life. But unfortunately a kind of family-pride here gained an ascendant over him ; and he began immediately to vie in splendour with the neighbouring country 'squires. With an estate not much above two hundred pounds a-year, and his wife's fortune, which did not exceed fifteen hundred pounds, he encumbered himself with a large retinue of servants, all clad in costly yellow liveries. For their master's honour, these people could not descend so low as to be careful in their apparel, but, in a month or two, were unfit to be seen ; the 'squire's dignity required that they should be new-equipped ; and his chief pleasure consisting in society and convivial mirth, hospitality threw open his doors, and, in less than three years, entertainments, hounds, and horses, entirely devoured a little patrimony, which, had it been managed with œconomy, might have secured to him a state of independence for the rest of his life, etc."

This passage, which has played a conspicuous part in all biographies of Fielding, was very carefully sifted by Mr. Keightley, who came to the conclusion that it was a "mere tissue of error and inconsistency."[1] Without going to this length, we must admit that it is manifestly

third and last volume of her *Memoirs* (1754), "the Dean had a high opinion of his Wit, which must be a Pleasure to him, as no Man was ever better qualified to judge, possessing it so eminently himself."

[1] Some of Mr. Keightley's criticisms were anticipated by Watson.

incorrect in many respects. If Fielding married in 1735 (though, as already pointed out, he may have married earlier, and retired to the country upon the failure of the *Universal Gallant*), he is certainly inaccurately described as "not having been long a writer for the stage," since writing for the stage had been his chief occupation for seven years. Then again his mother had died as far back as April 10, 1718, when he was a boy of eleven; and if he had inherited anything from her, he had probably been in the enjoyment of it ever since he came of age. Furthermore, the statement as to "three years" is at variance with the fact that, according to the dedication to the *Universal Gallant*, he was still in London in February 1735, and was back again managing the Haymarket in the first months of 1736. Murphy, however, may only mean that the "estate" at East Stour was in his possession for three years. Mr. Keightley's other points—namely, that the "tolerably respectable farm-house," in which he is supposed to have lived, was scarcely adapted to "splendid entertainments," or "a large retinue of servants;" and that, to be in strict accordance with the family arms, the liveries should have been not "yellow," but white and blue—must be taken for what they are worth. On the whole, the probability is, that Murphy's words were only the careless repetition of local tittle-tattle, of much of which, as Captain Booth says pertinently in *Amelia*, "the only basis is lying." The squires of the neighbourhood would naturally regard the dashing young gentleman from London with the same distrustful hostility that Addison's "Tory Foxhunter" exhibited to those who differed with him in politics. It would be remembered,

besides, that the new-comer was the son of another and an earlier Fielding of less pretensions, and no real cordiality could ever have existed between them. Indeed, it may be assumed that this was the case, for Booth's account of the opposition and ridicule which he—"a poor renter!"—encountered when he enlarged his farm and set up his coach has a distinct personal accent. That he was lavish, and lived beyond his means, is quite in accordance with his character. The man who, as a Bow Street magistrate, kept open house on a pittance, was not likely to be less lavish as a country gentleman, with £1500 in his pocket, and newly married to a young and handsome wife. "He would have wanted money," said Lady Mary, "if his hereditary lands had been as extensive as his imagination;" and there can be little doubt that the rafters of the old farm by the Stour, with the great locust tree at the back, which is figured in Hutchins's *History of Dorset*, rang often to hunting choruses, and that not seldom the "dusky Night rode down the Sky" over the prostrate forms of Harry Fielding's guests.[1] But even £1500, and (in spite of Murphy) it is by no means clear that he had anything more, could scarcely last for ever. Whether his footmen wore yellow or not, a few brief months found him again in town. That he was able

[1] An interesting relic of the East Stour residence has recently been presented by Mr. Merthyr Guest (through Mr. R. A. Kinglake) to the Somersetshire Archæological Society. It is an oak table of solid proportions, and bears on a brass plate the following inscription, emanating from a former owner:—"This table belonged to Henry Fielding, Esq., novelist. He hunted from East Stour Farm, 1718, and in three years dissipated his fortune keeping hounds." In 1718, it may be observed, Fielding was a boy of eleven. Probably the whole of the latter sentence is nothing more than a distortion of Murphy.

to rent a theatre may perhaps be accepted as proof that his profuse hospitalities had not completely exhausted his means.

The moment was a favourable one for a fresh theatrical experiment. The stage-world was split up into factions, the players were disorganised, and everything seemed in confusion. Whether Fielding himself conceived the idea of making capital out of this state of things, or whether it was suggested to him by some of the company who had acted *Don Quixote in England*, it is impossible to say. In the first months of 1736, however, he took the little French Theatre in the Haymarket, and opened it with a company which he christened the "Great Mogul's Company of Comedians," who were further described as "having dropped from the Clouds." The "Great Mogul" was a name sometimes given by playwrights to the elder Cibber; but there is no reason for supposing that any allusion to him was intended on this occasion. The company, with the exception of Macklin, who was playing at Drury Lane, consisted chiefly of the actors in *Don Quixote in England;* and the first piece was entitled *Pasquin: a Dramatick Satire on the Times: being the Rehearsal of Two Plays, viz. a Comedy call'd the Election, and a Tragedy call'd the Life and Death of Common-Sense.* The form of this work, which belongs to the same class as Sheridan's *Critic* and Buckingham's *Rehearsal*, was probably determined by Fielding's past experience of the public taste. His latest comedy had failed, and its predecessors had not been very successful. But his burlesques had met with a better reception, while the election episodes in *Don Quixote* had seemed to disclose a fresh field for the satire of con-

temporary manners. And in the satire of contemporary manners he felt his strength lay. The success of *Pasquin* proved he had not miscalculated, for it ran more than forty nights, drawing, if we may believe the unknown author of the life of Theophilus Cibber, numerous and enthusiastic audiences "from *Grosvenor*, *Cavendish*, *Hanover*, and all the other fashionable Squares, as also from *Pall Mall*, and the *Inns of Court*."

In regard to plot, the comedy which *Pasquin* contains scarcely deserves the name. It consists of a string of loosely-connected scenes, which depict the shameless political corruption of the Walpole era with a good deal of boldness and humour. The sole difference between the "Court party," represented by two Candidates with the Bunyan-like names of Lord Place and Colonel Promise, and the "Country party," whose nominees are Sir Harry Fox-Chace and Squire Tankard, is that the former bribe openly, the latter indirectly. The Mayor, whose sympathies are with the "Country party" is finally induced by his wife to vote for and return the other side, although they are in a minority; and the play is concluded by the precipitate marriage of his daughter with Colonel Promise. Mr. Fustian, the Tragic Author, who, with Mr. Sneerwell the Critic, is one of the spectators of the rehearsal, demurs to the abruptness with which this ingenious catastrophe is brought about, and inquires where the preliminary action, of which there is not the slightest evidence in the piece itself, has taken place. Thereupon Trapwit, the Comic Author, replies as follows, in one of those passages which show that, whatever Fielding's dramatic limitations may have been, he was at least a keen critic of stage practice:—

"*Trapwit.* Why, behind the Scenes, Sir. What, would you have every Thing brought upon the Stage? I intend to bring ours to the Dignity of the *French* Stage; and I have *Horace's* Advice of my Side; we have many Things both said and done in our Comedies, which might be better perform'd behind the Scenes: The *French*, you know, banish all Cruelty from their Stage; and I don't see why we should bring on a Lady in ours, practising all manner of Cruelty upon her Lover: beside, Sir, we do not only produce it, but encourage it; for I could name you some Comedies, if I would, where a Woman is brought in for four Acts together, behaving to a worthy Man in a Manner for which she almost deserves to be hang'd; and in the Fifth, forsooth, she is rewarded with him for a Husband: Now, Sir, as I know this hits some Tastes, and am willing to oblige all, I have given every Lady a Latitude of thinking mine has behaved in whatever Manner she would have her."

The part of Lord Place in the *Election*, after the first few nights, was taken by Cibber's daughter, the notorious Mrs. Charlotte Charke, whose extraordinary Memoirs are among the curiosities of eighteenth-century literature, and whose experiences were as varied as those of any character in fiction. She does not seem to have acted in the *Life and Death of Common-Sense*, the rehearsal of which followed that of the *Election*. This is a burlesque of the *Tom Thumb* type, much of which is written in vigorous blank verse. Queen Common-Sense is conspired against by Firebrand, Priest of the Sun, by Law, and by Physic. Law is incensed because she has endeavoured to make his piebald jargon intelligible; Physic because she has preferred Water Gruel to all his drugs; and Firebrand because she would restrain the power of Priests. Some of the strokes must have gone home to those receptive hearers who, as one contemporary account informs us, "were dull enough

not only to think they contain'd Wit and Humour, but Truth also":—

"*Queen Common-Sense.* My Lord of *Law*, I sent for you this Morning;
I have a strange Petition given to me;
Two Men, it seems, have lately been at Law
For an Estate, which both of them have lost,
And their Attorneys now divide between them.
Law. Madam, these things will happen in the Law.
Q. C. S. Will they, my Lord? then better we had none:
But I have also heard a sweet Bird sing,
That Men, unable to discharge their Debts
At a short Warning, being sued for them,
Have, with both Power and Will their Debts to pay
Lain all their Lives in Prison for their Costs.
Law. That may perhaps be some poor Person's Case.
Too mean to entertain your Royal Ear.
Q. C. S. My Lord, while I am Queen I shall not think
One Man too mean, or poor, to be redress'd;
Moreover, Lord, I am inform'd your Laws
Are grown so large, and daily yet encrease,
That the great Age of old *Methusalem*
Would scarce suffice to read your Statutes out."

There is also much more than merely transitory satire in the speech of "Firebrand" to the Queen:—

"*Firebrand.* Ha! do you doubt it? nay, if you doubt that,
I will prove nothing—But my zeal inspires me,
And I will tell you, Madam, you yourself
Are a most deadly Enemy to the Sun,
And all his Priests have greatest Cause to wish
You had been never born.
Q. C. S. Ha! say'st thou, Priest?
Then know I honour and adore the Sun!
And when I see his Light, and feel his Warmth,
I glow with flaming Gratitude toward him;
But know, I never will adore a Priest,

Who wears Pride's Face beneath Religion's Mask.
And makes a Pick-Lock of his Piety,
To steal away the Liberty of Mankind.
But while I live, I'll never give thee Power.
Firebrand. Madam, our Power is not deriv'd from you,
Nor any one: 'Twas sent us in a Box
From the great Sun himself, and Carriage paid;
Phaeton brought it when he overturn'd
The Chariot of the Sun into the Sea.
Q. C. S. Shew me the Instrument, and let me read it.
Fireb. Madam, you cannot read it, for being thrown
Into the Sea, the Water has so damag'd it,
That none but Priests could ever read it since."

In the end, Firebrand stabs Common-Sense, but her Ghost frightens Ignorance off the Stage, upon which Sneerwell says—"I am glad you make *Common-Sense* get the better at last; I was under terrible Apprehensions for your Moral." "Faith, Sir," says Fustian, "this is almost the only Play where she has got the better lately." And so the piece closes. But it would be wrong to quit it without some reference to the numberless little touches by which, throughout the whole, the humours of dramatic life behind the scenes are ironically depicted. The Comic Poet is arrested on his way from "*King's Coffee-House*," and the claim being "for upwards of Four Pound," it is at first supposed that "he will hardly get Bail." He is subsequently inquired after by a Gentlewoman in a Riding-Hood, whom he passes off as a Lady of Quality, but who, in reality, is bringing him a clean shirt. There are difficulties with one of the Ghosts, who has a "Church-yard Cough," and "is so Lame he can hardly walk the Stage;" while another comes to rehearsal without being properly floured, because the stage barber has gone to Drury Lane "to shave the

Sultan in the New Entertainment." On the other hand, the Ghost of Queen Common-Sense appears before she is killed, and is with some difficulty persuaded that her action is premature. Part of "the Mob" play truant to see a show in the park; Law, straying without the playhouse passage is snapped up by a Lord Chief-Justice's Warrant; and a Jew carries off one of the Maids of Honour. These little incidents, together with the unblushing realism of the Pots of Porter that are made to do duty for wine, and the extra two-pennyworth of Lightning that is ordered against the first night, are all in the spirit of that inimitable picture of the *Strolling Actresses dressing in a Barn*, which Hogarth gave to the world two years later, and which, very possibly, may have borrowed some of its inspiration from Fielding's "dramatic satire."

There is every reason to suppose that the profits of *Pasquin* were far greater than those of any of its author's previous efforts. In a rare contemporary caricature, preserved in the British Museum,[1] the "Queen of Common-Sense" is shown presenting "Henry Fielding, Esq.," with a well-filled purse, while to "Harlequin" (John Rich of Covent Garden) she extends a halter; and in some doggerel lines underneath, reference is made to the "show'rs of Gold" resulting from the piece. This, of course, might be no more than a poetical fiction; but Fielding himself attests the pecuniary success of *Pasquin* in the Dedication to *Tumble-Down Dick*, and Mrs. Charke's statement in her Memoirs that her salary for acting the small part of Lord Place was four guineas a week, "with an Indulgence in Point of

[1] Political and Personal Satires, No. 2287.

Charges at her Benefit" by which she cleared sixty guineas, certainly points to a prosperous exchequer. Fielding's own benefit, as appears from the curious ticket attributed to Hogarth and facsimiled by A. M. Ireland, took place on April 25, but we have no record of the amount of his gains. Mrs. Charke farther says that "soon after *Pasquin* began to droop," Fielding produced Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity* in which she acted Agnes. This tragedy, founded on a Cornish story, is one of remarkable power and passion; but upon its first appearance it made little impression, although in the succeeding year it was acted to greater advantage in combination with another satirical medley by Fielding, the *Historical Register for the Year* 1736.

Like most sequels, the *Historical Register* had neither the vogue nor the wit of its predecessor. It was only half as long, and it was even more disconnected in character. "Harmonious Cibber," as Swift calls him, whose "preposterous Odes" had already been ridiculed in *Pasquin* and the *Author's Farce*, was once more brought on the stage as Ground-Ivy, for his alterations of Shakespeare; and under the name of Pistol, Theophilus Cibber is made to refer to the contention between his second wife, Arne's sister, and Mrs. Clive, for the honour of playing "Polly" in the *Beggar's Opera*, a play-house feud which at the latter end of 1736 had engaged "the Town" almost as seriously as the earlier rivalry of Faustina and Cuzzoni. This continued raillery of the Cibbers is, as Fielding himself seems to have felt, a "Jest a little overacted;" but there is one scene in the piece of undeniable freshness and humour, to wit, that in which Cock, the famous salesman of the Piazzas—the George Robins of

his day—is brought on the stage as Mr. Auctioneer Hen (a part taken by Mrs. Charke). His wares, "collected by the indefatigable Pains of that celebrated Virtuoso, *Peter Humdrum*, Esq.," include such desirable items as "curious Remnants of Political Honesty," "delicate Pieces of Patriotism," Modesty (which does not obtain a bid), Courage, Wit, and "a very neat clear Conscience" of great capacity, "which has been worn by a Judge, and a Bishop." The "Cardinal Virtues" are then put up, and eighteen-pence is bid for them. But after they have been knocked down at this extravagant sum, the buyer complains that he had understood the auctioneer to say "a Cardinal's Virtues," and that the lot he has purchased includes "Temperance and Chastity, and a Pack of Stuff that he would not give three Farthings for." The whole of this scene is "admirable fooling;" and it was afterwards impudently stolen by Theophilus Cibber for his farce of the *Auction*. The *Historical Register* concludes with a dialogue between Quidam, in whom the audience recognised Sir Robert Walpole, and four patriots, to whom he gives a purse which has an instantaneous effect upon their opinions. All five then go off dancing to Quidam's fiddle; and it is explained that they have holes in their pockets through which the money will fall as they dance, enabling the donor to pick it all up again, "and so not lose one Half-penny by his Generosity."

The frank effrontery of satire like the foregoing had by this time begun to attract the attention of the Ministry, whose withers had already been sharply wrung by *Pasquin;* and it has been conjectured that the ballet of Quidam and the Patriots played no small part in precipitating the famous "Licensing Act," which was

passed a few weeks afterwards. Like the marriage which succeeded the funeral of Hamlet's father, it certainly "followed hard upon." But the reformation of the stage had already been contemplated by the Legislature; and two years before, Sir John Barnard had brought in a bill "to restrain the number of houses for playing of Interludes, and for the better regulating of common Players of Interludes." This, however, had been abandoned, because it was proposed to add a clause enlarging the power of the Lord Chamberlain in licensing plays, an addition to which the introducer of the measure made strong objection. He thought the power of the Lord Chamberlain already too great, and in support of his argument he instanced its wanton exercise in the case of Gay's *Polly*, the representation of which had been suddenly prohibited a few years earlier. But *Pasquin* and the *Register* brought the question of dramatic lawlessness again to the front, and a bill was hurriedly drawn, one effect of which was to revive the very provision that Sir John Barnard had opposed. The history of this affair is exceedingly obscure, and in all probability it has never been completely revealed. The received or authorised version is to be found in Coxe's *Life of Walpole*. After dwelling on the offence given to the Government by *Pasquin*, the writer goes on to say that Giffard, the manager of Goodman's Fields, brought Walpole a farce called *The Golden Rump*, which had been proposed for exhibition. Whether he did this to extort money, or to ask advice, is not clear. In either case, Walpole is said to have "paid the profits which might have accrued from the performance, and detained the copy." He then made a compendious selection of the

treasonable and profane passages it contained. These he submitted to independent members of both parties, and afterwards read them in the House itself. The result was that by way of amendment to the "Vagrant Act" of Anne's reign, a bill was prepared limiting the number of theatres, and compelling all dramatic writers to obtain a license from the Lord Chamberlain. Such is Coxe's account; but notwithstanding its circumstantial character, it has been insinuated in the sham memoirs of the younger Cibber, and it is plainly asserted in the *Rambler's Magazine* for 1787, that certain preliminary details have been conveniently suppressed. It is alleged that Walpole himself caused the farce in question to be written, and to be offered to Giffard, for the purpose of introducing his scheme of reform; and the suggestion is not without a certain remote plausibility. As may be guessed, however, *The Golden Rump* cannot be appealed to. It was never printed, although its title is identical with that of a caricature published in March 1737, and fully described in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for that month. If the play at all resembled the design, it must have been obscene and scurrilous in the extreme.[1]

Meanwhile the new bill, to which it had given rise, passed rapidly through both Houses. Report speaks of animated discussions and warm opposition. But there are no traces of any divisions, or petitions against it,

[1] Horace Walpole, in his *Memoires of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George II.*, says (vol. i. p. 12), "I have in my possession the imperfect copy of this piece as I found it among my father's papers after his death." He calls it Fielding's; but no importance can be attached to the statement. There is a copy of the caricature in the British Museum Print Room (Political and Personal Satires, No. 2327).

and the only speech which has survived is the very elaborate and careful oration delivered in the Upper House by Lord Chesterfield. The "second Cicero"—as Sylvanus Urban styles him—opposed the bill upon the ground that it would affect the liberty of the press; and that it was practically a tax upon the chief property of men of letters, their wit—a "precarious dependence"—which (he thanked God) my Lords were not obliged to rely upon. He dwelt also upon the value of the stage as a fearless censor of vice and folly; and he quoted with excellent effect but doubtful accuracy the famous answer of the Prince of Conti [Condé] to Molière [Louis XIV.] when *Tartuffe* was interdicted at the instance of M. de Lamoignon:—"It is true, Molière, Harlequin ridicules Heaven, and exposes religion; but you have done much worse—you have ridiculed the first minister of religion." This, although not directly advanced for the purpose, really indicated the head and front of Fielding's offending in *Pasquin* and the *Historical Register*, and although in Lord Chesterfield's speech the former is ironically condemned, it may well be that Fielding, whose *Don Quixote* had been dedicated to his Lordship, was the wire-puller in this case, and supplied this very illustration. At all events it is entirely in the spirit of Firebrand's words in *Pasquin*:—

> "Speak boldly; by the Powers I serve, I swear
> You speak in Safety, even tho' you speak
> Against the Gods, provided that you speak
> Not against Priests."

But the feeling of Parliament in favour of drastic legislation was even stronger than the persuasive periods

of Chesterfield, and on the 21st of June 1737 the bill received the royal assent.

With its passing Fielding's career as a dramatic author practically closed. In his dedication of the *Historical Register* to "the Publick," he had spoken of his desire to beautify and enlarge his little theatre, and to procure a better company of actors; and he had added —"If Nature hath given me any Talents at ridiculing Vice and Imposture, I shall not be indolent, nor afraid of exerting them, while the Liberty of the Press and Stage subsists, that is to say, while we have any Liberty left among us." To all these projects the "Licensing Act" effectively put an end; and the only other plays from his pen which were produced subsequently to this date were the "Wedding Day," 1743, and the posthumous *Good-Natured Man*, 1779, both of which, as is plain from the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, were among his earliest attempts. In the little farce of *Miss Lucy in Town*, 1742, he had, he says, but "a very small Share." Besides these, there are three hasty and flimsy pieces which belong to the early part of 1737. The first of these, *Tumble-Down Dick; or, Phaeton in the Suds*, was a dramatic sketch in ridicule of the unmeaning Entertainments and Harlequinades of John Rich at Covent Garden. This was ironically dedicated to Rich, under his stage name of "John Lun," and from the dedication it appears that Rich had brought out an unsuccessful satire on *Pasquin* called *Marforio*. The other two were *Eurydice*, a profane and pointless farce, afterwards printed by its author (in anticipation of Beaumarchais) "as it was d—mned at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane;" and a few detached scenes in which, under the

title of *Eurydice Hiss'd; or, a Word to the Wise*, its untoward fate was attributed to the "frail Promise of uncertain Friends." But even in these careless and half-considered productions there are happy strokes; and one scarcely looks to find such nervous and sensible lines in a mere *à propos* as these from *Eurydice Hiss'd*:—

> "Yet grant it shou'd succeed, grant that by Chance,
> Or by the Whim and Madness of the Town,
> A Farce without Contrivance, without Sense
> Should run to the Astonishment of Mankind;
> Think how you will be read in After-times,
> When Friends are not, and the impartial Judge
> Shall with the meanest Scribbler rank your Name;
> Who would not rather wish a *Butler's* fame,
> Distress'd, and poor in every thing but Merit,
> Than be the blundering Laureat to a Court?"

Self-accusatory passages such as this—and there are others like it—indicate a higher ideal of dramatic writing than Fielding is held to have attained, and probably the key to them is to be found in that reaction of better judgment which seems invariably to have followed his most reckless efforts. It was a part of his sanguine and impulsive nature to be as easily persuaded that his work was worthless as that it was excellent. "When," says Murphy, "he was not under the immediate urgency of want, they, who were intimate with him, are ready to aver that he had a mind greatly superior to anything mean or little; when his finances were exhausted, he was not the most elegant in his choice of the means to redress himself, and he would instantly exhibit a farce or a puppet-shew in the Haymarket theatre, which was wholly inconsistent with the profession he had embarked in." The quotation displays all

Murphy's loose and negligent way of dealing with his facts; for, with the exception of *Miss Lucy in Town*, which can scarcely be ranked among his works at all, there is absolutely no trace of Fielding's having exhibited either "puppet-shew" or "farce" after seriously adopting the law as a profession, nor does there appear to have been much acting at the Haymarket for some time after his management had closed in 1737. Still, his superficial characteristics, which do not depend so much upon Murphy as upon those "who were intimate with him," are probably accurately described, and they sufficiently account for many of the obvious discordances of his work and life. That he was fully conscious of something higher than his actual achievement as a dramatist is clear from his own observation in later life, "that he left off writing for the stage, when he ought to have begun;"—an utterance which (we shrewdly suspect) has prompted not a little profitless speculation as to whether, if he had continued to write plays, they would have been equal to, or worse than, his novels. The discussion would be highly interesting, if there were the slightest chance that it could be attended with any satisfactory result. But the truth is, that the very materials are wanting. Fielding "left off writing for the stage" when he was under thirty; *Tom Jones* was published in 1749, when he was more than forty. His plays were written in haste; his novels at leisure, and when, for the most part, he was relieved from that "immediate urgency of want," which, according to Murphy, characterised his younger days. If—as has been suggested—we could compare a novel written at thirty with a play of the same date, or a play written at forty with *Tom Jones*,

the comparison might be instructive, although even then considerable allowances would have to be made for the essential difference between plays and novels. But, as we cannot make such a comparison, further inquiry is simply waste of time. All we can safely affirm is, that the plays of Fielding's youth did not equal the fictions of his maturity; and that, of those plays, the comedies were less successful than the farces and burlesques. Among other reasons for this latter difference one chiefly may be given: — that in the comedies he sought to reproduce the artificial world of Congreve and Wycherley, while in the burlesques and farces he depicted the world in which he lived.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHAMPION—JOSEPH ANDREWS.

THE *Historical Register* and *Eurydice Hiss'd* were published together in June 1737. By this time the "Licensing Act" was passed, and the "Grand Mogul's Company" dispersed for ever. Fielding was now in his thirty-first year, with a wife and probably a daughter depending on him for support. In the absence of any prospect that he would be able to secure a maintenance as a dramatic writer, he seems to have decided, in spite of his comparatively advanced age, to revert to the profession for which he had originally been intended, and to qualify himself for the Bar. Accordingly, at the close of the year, he became a student of the Middle Temple, and the books of that society contain the following record of his admission:[1]—

[574 G] 1 *Nov*^{ris} 1737.

Henricus Fielding, de East Stour in Com Dorset Ar, filius et hæres apparens Brig: Gen^{lis}*: Edmundi Fielding admissus est in Societatem Medii Templi Lond specialiter et obligatur una cum etc.*

Et dat pro fine 4. 0. 0.

It may be noted, as Mr. Keightley has already

[1] This differs slightly from previous transcripts, having been verified at the Middle Temple.

observed, that Fielding is described in this entry as of East Stour, "which would seem to indicate that he still retained his property at that place;" and further, that his father is spoken of as a "brigadier-general," whereas (according to the *Gentleman's Magazine*) he had been made a major-general in December 1735. Of discrepancies like these it is idle to attempt any explanation. But, if Murphy is to be believed, Fielding devoted himself henceforth with remarkable assiduity to the study of law. The old irregularity of life, it is alleged, occasionally asserted itself, though without checking the energy of his application. "This," says his first biographer, "prevailed in him to such a degree, that he has been frequently known, by his intimates, to retire late at night from a tavern to his chambers, and there read, and make extracts from, the most abstruse authors, for several hours before he went to bed; so powerful were the vigour of his constitution and the activity of his mind." It is to this passage, no doubt, that we owe the picturesque wet towel and inked ruffles with which Mr. Thackeray has decorated him in *Pendennis;* and, in all probability, a good deal of graphic writing from less able pens respecting his *modus vivendi* as a Templar. In point of fact, nothing is known with certainty respecting his life at this period; and what it would really concern us to learn—namely, whether by "chambers" it is to be understood that he was living alone, and, if so, where Mrs. Fielding was at the time of these protracted vigils—Murphy has not told us. Perhaps she was safe all the while at East Stour, or with her sisters at Salisbury. Having no precise information, however, it can only be recorded, that, in spite of the fitful

outbreaks above referred to, Fielding applied himself to the study of his profession with all the vigour of a man who has to make up for lost time; and that, when on the 20th of June 1740 the day came for his being "called," he was very fairly equipped with legal knowledge. That he had also made many friends among his colleagues of Westminster Hall is manifest from the number of lawyers who figure in the subscription list of the *Miscellanies*.

To what extent he was occupied by literary work during his probationary period it is difficult to say. Murphy speaks vaguely of "a large number of fugitive political tracts;" but unless the *Essay on Conversation*, advertised by Lawton Gilliver in 1737, be the same as that afterwards reprinted in the *Miscellanies*, there is no positive record of anything until the issue of *True Greatness*, an epistle to George Dodington, in January 1741, though he may, of course, have written much anonymously. Among newspapers, the one Murphy had in mind was probably the *Champion*, the first number of which is dated November 15, 1739, two years after his admission to the Middle Temple as a student. On the whole, it seems most likely, as Mr. Keightley conjectures, that his chief occupation in the interval was studying law, and that he must have been living upon the residue of his wife's fortune or his own means, in which case the establishment of the above periodical may mark the exhaustion of his resources.

The *Champion* is a paper on the model of the elder essayists. It was issued, like the *Tatler*, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Murphy says that Fielding's part in it cannot now be ascertained; but as the

"Advertisement" to the edition in two volumes of 1741 states expressly that the papers signed C. and L. are the "Work of one Hand," and as a number of those signed C are unmistakably Fielding's, it is hard to discover where the difficulty lay. The papers signed C. and L. are by far the most numerous, the majority of the remainder being distinguished by two stars, or the signature "Lilbourne." These are understood to have been from the pen of James Ralph, whose poem of *Night* gave rise to a stinging couplet in the *Dunciad*, but who was nevertheless a man of parts, and an industrious writer. As will be remembered, he had contributed a prologue to the *Temple Beau*, so that his association with Fielding must have been of some standing. Besides Ralph's essays in the *Champion*, he was mainly responsible for the *Index to the Times* which accompanied each number, and consisted of a series of brief paragraphs on current topics, or the last new book. In this way Glover's *London*, Boyse's *Deity*, Somervile's *Hobbinol*, Lillo's *Elmeric*, Dyer's *Ruins of Rome*, and other of the very minor *poetæ minores* of the day, were commented upon. These notes and notices, however, were only a subordinate feature of the *Champion*, which, like its predecessors, consisted chiefly of essays and allegories, social, moral, and political, the writers of which were supposed to be members of an imaginary "Vinegar family," described in the initial paper. Of these the most prominent was Captain Hercules Vinegar, who took all questions relating to the Army, Militia, Trained-Bands, and "fighting Part of the Kingdom." His father, Nehemiah Vinegar, presided over history and politics; his uncle, Counsellor Vinegar, over law and judicature;

and Dr. John Vinegar his cousin, over medicine and natural philosophy. To others of the family—including Mrs. Joan Vinegar, who was charged with domestic affairs—were allotted classic literature, poetry and the Drama, and fashion. This elaborate scheme was not very strictly adhered to, and the chief writer of the group is Captain Hercules.

Shorn of the contemporary interest which formed the chief element of its success when it was first published, it must be admitted that, in the present year of grace, the *Champion* is hard reading. A kind of lassitude—a sense of uncongenial task-work—broods heavily over Fielding's contributions, except the one or two in which he is quickened into animation by his antagonism to Cibber; and although, with our knowledge of his after achievements, it is possible to trace some indications of his yet unrevealed powers, in the absence of such knowledge it would be difficult to distinguish the *Champion* from the hundred-and-one forgotten imitators of the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, whose names have been so patiently chronicled by Dr. Nathan Drake. There is, indeed, a certain obvious humour in the account of Captain Vinegar's famous club, which he had inherited from Hercules, and which had the enviable property of falling of itself upon any knave in company, and there is a dash of the *Tom Jones* manner in the noisy activity of that excellent housewife Mrs. Joan. Some of the lighter papers, such as the one upon the "Art of Puffing," are amusing enough; and of the visions, that which is based upon Lucian, and represents Charon as stripping his freight of all their superfluous incumbrances in order to lighten his boat, has a double

interest, since it contains references not only to Cibber, but also (though this appears to have been hitherto overlooked) to Fielding himself. The "tall Man," who at Mercury's request strips off his "old Grey Coat with great Readiness," but refuses to part with "half his Chin," which the shepherd of souls regards as false, is clearly intended for the writer of the paper, even without the confirmation afforded by the subsequent allusions to his connection with the stage. His "length of chin and nose," sufficiently apparent in his portrait, was a favourite theme for contemporary personalities. Of the moral essays, the most remarkable are a set of four papers, entitled *An Apology for the Clergy*, which may perhaps be regarded as a set-off against the sarcasms of *Pasquin* on priestcraft. They depict, with a great deal of knowledge and discrimination, the pattern priest as Fielding conceived him. To these may be linked an earlier picture, taken from life, of a country parson who, in his simple and dignified surroundings, even more closely resembles the Vicar of Wakefield than Mr. Abraham Adams. Some of the more general articles contain happy passages. In one there is an admirable parody of the Norman-French jargon, which in those days added superfluous obscurity to legal utterances; while another, on "Charity," contains a forcible exposition of the inexpediency, as well as inhumanity, of imprisonment for debt. References to contemporaries, the inevitable Cibber excepted, are few, and these seem mostly from the pen of Ralph. The following, from that of Fielding, is notable as being one of the earliest authoritative testimonies to the merits of Hogarth: "I esteem (says he) the ingenious *Mr. Hogarth* as one of

the most useful Satyrists any Age hath produced. In his excellent Works you see the delusive Scene exposed with all the Force of Humour, and, on casting your Eyes on another Picture, you behold the dreadful and fatal Consequence. I almost dare affirm that those two Works of his, which he calls the *Rake's* and the *Harlot's Progress*, are calculated more to serve the Cause of Virtue, and for the Preservation of Mankind, than all the *Folio's* of Morality which have been ever written; and a sober Family should no more be without them, than without the *Whole Duty of Man* in their House." He returned to the same theme in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews* with a still apter phrase of appreciation:—"It hath been thought a vast Commendation of a Painter, to say his Figures seem to breathe; but surely, it is a much greater and nobler Applause, that they appear to think."[1]

When the *Champion* was rather more than a year old, Colley Cibber published his famous *Apology*. To the attacks made upon him by Fielding at different times he had hitherto printed no reply—perhaps he had no opportunity of doing so. But in his eighth chapter, when speaking of the causes which led to the Licensing Act, he takes occasion to refer to his assailant in terms which Fielding must have found exceedingly galling. He carefully abstained from mentioning his name, on the ground that it could do him no good, and was of

[1] Fielding occasionally refers to Hogarth for the pictorial types of his characters. Bridget Allworthy, he tells us, resembled the starched prude in *Morning;* and Mrs. Partridge and Parson Thwackum have their originals in the *Harlot's Progress*. It was Fielding, too, who said that the *Enraged Musician* was "enough to make a man deaf to look at" (*Voyage to Lisbon*, 1755, p. 50).

no importance; but he described him as "a broken Wit," who had sought notoriety "by raking the Channel" (*i.e.* Kennel), and "pelting his Superiors." He accused him, with a scandalised gravity that is as edifying as Chesterfield's irony, of attacking "Religion, Laws, Government, Priests, Judges, and Ministers." He called him, either in allusion to his stature, or his pseudonym in the *Champion*, a "*Herculean* Satyrist," a "*Drawcansir* in Wit"—"who, to make his Poetical Fame immortal, like another *Erostratus*, set Fire to his Stage, by writing up to an Act of Parliament to demolish it. I shall not," he continues, "give the particular Strokes of his Ingenuity a Chance to be remembered, by reciting them; it may be enough to say, in general Terms, they were so openly flagrant, that the Wisdom of the Legislature thought it high time, to take a proper Notice of them."

Fielding was not the man to leave such a challenge unanswered. In the *Champion* for April 22, 1740, and two subsequent papers, he replied with a slashing criticism of the *Apology*, in which, after demonstrating that it must be written in English because it was written in no other language, he gravely proceeds to point out examples of the author's superiority to grammar and learning—and in general, subjects its pretentious and slip-shod style to a minute and highly detrimental examination. In a further paper he returns to the charge by a mock trial of one "Col. *Apol.*" (*i.e.* Colley-*Apology*), arraigning him for that, "not having the Fear of Grammar before his Eyes," he had committed an unpardonable assault upon his mother-tongue. Fielding's knowledge of legal forms and phraseology enabled

him to make a happy parody of court procedure, and Mr. Lawrence says that this particular "*jeu d'esprit* obtained great celebrity." But the happiest stroke in the controversy—as it seems to us—is one which escaped Mr. Lawrence, and occurs in the paper already referred to, where Charon and Mercury are shown denuding the luckless passengers by the Styx of their surplus *impedimenta*. Among the rest, approaches "an elderly Gentleman with a Piece of wither'd Laurel on his head." From a little book, which he is discovered (when stripped) to have bound close to his heart, and which bears the title of *Love in a Riddle*—an unsuccessful pastoral produced by Cibber at Drury Lane in 1729—it is clear that this personage is intended for none other than the Apologist, who, after many entreaties, is finally compelled to part with his treasure. "I was surprized," continues Fielding, "to see him pass Examination with his Laurel on, and was assured by the Standers by, that *Mercury* would have taken it off, if he had seen it."

These attacks in the *Champion* do not appear to have received any direct response from Cibber. But they were reprinted in a rambling production issued from "Curll's chaste press" in 1740, and entitled the *Tryal of Colley Cibber, Comedian*, &c. At the end of this there is a short address to "*the Self-dubb'd Captain* Hercules Vinegar, *alias* Buffoon," to the effect that "the malevolent Flings exhibited by him and his Man *Ralph*," have been faithfully reproduced. Then comes the following curious and not very intelligible "Advertisement:"—

"If the Ingenious *Henry Fielding* Esq.; (Son of the Hon. Lieut. General *Fielding*, who upon his Return from his Travels entered himself of the *Temple* in order to study the

Law, and married one of the pretty Miss *Cradocks* of *Salisbury*) will *own* himself the AUTHOR of 18 strange Things called Tragical *Comedies* and Comical *Tragedies*, lately advertised by *J. Watts*, of *Wild-Court*, Printer, he shall be *mentioned* in Capitals in the *Third* Edition of Mr. CIBBER'S *Life*, and likewise be placed *among* the *Poetæ minores Dramatici* of the Present Age: Then will both his *Name and Writings be remembered on Record* in the immortal *Poetical Register* written by Mr. GILES JACOB."

The "poetical register" indicated was the book of that name, containing the *Lives and Characteristics of the English Dramatic Poets*, which Mr. Giles Jacob, an industrious literary hack, had issued in 1723. Mr. Lawrence is probably right in his supposition, based upon the foregoing advertisement, that Fielding "had openly expressed resentment at being described by Cibber as 'a broken wit,' without being mentioned by name." He never seems to have wholly forgotten his animosity to the actor, to whom there are frequent references in *Joseph Andrews;* and, as late as 1749, he is still found harping on "the withered laurel" in a letter to Lyttelton. Even in his last work, the *Voyage to Lisbon*, Cibber's name is mentioned. The origin of this protracted feud is obscure; but, apart from want of sympathy, it must probably be sought for in some early misunderstanding between the two in their capacities of manager and author. As regards Theophilus Cibber, his desertion of Highmore was sufficient reason for the ridicule cast upon him in the *Author's Farce* and elsewhere. With Mrs. Charke, the Laureate's intractable and eccentric daughter, Fielding was naturally on better terms. She was, as already stated, a member of the Great Mogul's Company, and it is worth noting that some of the sar-

casms in *Pasquin* against her father were put into the mouth of Lord Place, whose part was taken by this undutiful child. All things considered, both in this controversy and the later one with Pope, Cibber did not come off worst. His few hits were personal and unscrupulous, and they were probably far more deadly in their effects than any of the ironical attacks which his adversaries, on their part, directed against his poetical ineptitude or halting "parts of speech." Despite his superlative coxcombry and egotism, he was, moreover, a man of no mean abilities. His *Careless Husband* is a far better acting play than any of Fielding's, and his *Apology*, which even Johnson allowed to be "well-done," is valuable in many respects, especially for its account of the contemporary stage. In describing an actor or actress he had few equals—witness his skilful portrait of Nokes, and his admirably graphic vignette of Mrs. Verbruggen as that "finish'd Impertinent," Melantha, in Dryden's *Marriage à-la-Mode*.

The concluding paper in the collected edition of the *Champion*, published in 1741, is dated June 19, 1740. On the day following Fielding was called to the Bar by the benchers of the Middle Temple, and (says Mr. Lawrence) "chambers were assigned him in Pump Court." Simultaneously with this, his regular connection with journalism appears to have ceased, although from his statement in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*,—that "as long as from *June* 1741," he had "desisted from writing one Syllable in the *Champion*, or any other public Paper," —it may perhaps be inferred that up to that date he continued to contribute now and then. This, nevertheless, is by no means clear. His last utterance in the pub-

lished volumes is certainly in a sense valedictory, as it refers to the position acquired by the *Champion*, and the difficulty experienced in establishing it. Incidentally, it pays a high compliment to Pope, by speaking of "the divine Translation of the *Iliad*, which he [Fielding] has lately with *no Disadvantage to the Translator* COMPARED with the Original," the point of the sentence so impressed by its typography, being apparently directed against those critics who had condemned Pope's work without the requisite knowledge of Greek. From the tenor of the rest of the essay it may, however, be concluded that the writer was taking leave of his enterprise; and, according to a note by Boswell, in his *Life of Johnson*, it seems that Mr. Reed of Staple Inn possessed documents which showed that Fielding at this juncture, probably in anticipation of more lucrative legal duties, surrendered the reins to Ralph. The *Champion* continued to exist for some time longer; indeed, it must be regarded as long-lived among the essayists, since the issue which contained its well-known criticism on Garrick is No. 455, and appeared late in 1742. But as far as can be ascertained, it never again obtained the honours of a reprint.

Although, after he was called to the Bar, Fielding practically relinquished periodical literature, he does not seem to have entirely desisted from writing. In Sylvanus Urban's Register of Books, published during January 1741, is advertised the poem *Of True Greatness* afterwards included in the *Miscellanies;* and the same authority announces the *Vernoniad*, an anonymous burlesque Epic prompted by Admiral Vernon's popular expedition against Porto Bello in 1739, "with six Ships

only." That Fielding was the author of the latter is sufficiently proved by his order to Mr. Nourse (printed in Roscoe's edition), to deliver fifty copies to Mr Chappel. Another sixpenny pamphlet, entitled *The Opposition, a Vision*, issued in December of the same year, is enumerated by him, in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, among the few works he had published "since the End of *June* 1741;" and, provided it can be placed before this date, he may be credited with a political sermon called the *Crisis* (1741), which is ascribed to him upon the authority of a writer in Nichols's *Anecdotes*. He may also, before "the End of *June* 1741," have written other things; but it is clear from his *Caveat* in the above-mentioned "Preface," together with his complaint that "he had been very unjustly censured, as well on account of what he had not writ, as for what he had," that much more has been laid to his charge than he ever deserved. Among ascriptions of this kind may be mentioned the curious *Apology for the Life of Mr. Thé Cibber, Comedian*, 1740, which is described on its title-page as a proper sequel to the autobiography of the Laureate, in whose "style and manner" it is said to be written. But, although this performance is evidently the work of some one well acquainted with the dramatic annals of the day, it is more than doubtful whether Fielding had any hand or part in it. Indeed, his own statement that "he never was, nor would be the Author of *anonymous* Scandal [the italics are ours] on the private History or Family of any Person whatever," should be regarded as conclusive.

During all this time he seems to have been steadily applying himself to the practice of his profession, if,

indeed, that weary hope deferred which forms the usual probation of legal preferment can properly be so described. As might be anticipated from his Salisbury connections, he travelled the Western Circuit; and, according to Hutchins's *Dorset*, he assiduously attended the Wiltshire sessions. He had many friends among his brethren of the Bar. His cousin, Henry Gould, who had been called in 1734, and who, like his grandfather, ultimately became a Judge, was also a member of the Middle Temple; and he was familiar with Charles Pratt, afterwards Lord Camden, whom he may have known at Eton, but whom he certainly knew in his barrister days. It is probable, too, that he was acquainted with Lord Northington, then Robert Henley, whose name appears as a subscriber to the *Miscellanies*, and who was once supposed to contend with Kettleby (another subscriber) for the honour of being the original of the drunken barrister in Hogarth's *Midnight Modern Conversation*, a picture which no doubt accurately represents a good many of the festivals by which Henry Fielding relieved the tedium of composing those MS. *folio* volumes on Crown or Criminal Law, which, after his death, reverted to his half-brother, Sir John. But towards the close of 1741 he was engaged upon another work which has outweighed all his most laborious forensic efforts, and which will long remain an English classic. This was *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, published by Andrew Millar in February 1742.

In the same number, and at the same page of the *Gentleman's Magazine* which contains the advertisement of the *Vernoniad*, there is a reference to a famous novel

which had appeared in November 1740, two months earlier, and had already attained an extraordinary popularity. "Several Encomiums (says Mr. Urban) on a Series of *Familiar Letters*, publish'd but last month, entitled PAMELA or *Virtue rewarded*, came too late for this Magazine, and we believe there will be little Occasion for inserting them in our next; because a Second Edition will then come out to supply the Demands in the Country, it being judged in Town as great a Sign of Want of Curiosity not to have read *Pamela*, as not to have seen the *French* and *Italian* Dancers." A second edition was in fact published in the following month (February), to be speedily succeeded by a third in March and a fourth in May. Dr. Sherlock (oddly misprinted by Mrs. Barbauld as "Dr. Slocock") extolled it from the pulpit; and the great Mr. Pope was reported to have gone farther and declared that it would "do more good than many volumes of sermons." Other admirers ranked it next to the Bible; clergymen dedicated theological treatises to the author; and "even at Ranelagh"—says Richardson's biographer—"those who remember the publication say, that it was usual for ladies to hold up the volumes of Pamela to one another, to shew that they had got the book that every one was talking of." It is perhaps hypercritical to observe that Ranelagh Gardens were not opened until eighteen months after Mr. Rivington's *duodecimos* first made their appearance; but it will be gathered from the tone of some of the foregoing commendations that its morality was a strong point with the new candidate for literary fame; and its voluminous title-page did indeed proclaim at large that it was "Published in order to cultivate the Prin-

ciples of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youth of Both Sexes." Its author, Samuel Richardson, was a middle-aged London printer, a vegetarian and water-drinker, a worthy, domesticated, fussy, and highly-nervous little man. Delighting in female society, and accustomed to act as confidant and amanuensis for the young women of his acquaintance, it had been suggested to him by some bookseller friends that he should prepare a "little volume of Letters, in a common style, on such subjects as might be of use to those country readers, who were unable to indite for themselves." As Hogarth's Conversation Pieces grew into his Progresses, so this project seems to have developed into *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. The necessity for some connecting link between the letters suggested a story, and the story chosen was founded upon the actual experiences of a young servant girl, who, after victoriously resisting all the attempts made by her master to seduce her, ultimately obliged him to marry her. It is needless to give any account here of the minute and deliberate way in which Richardson filled in this outline. As one of his critics, D'Alembert, has unanswerably said—"*La nature est bonne à imiter, mais non pas jusqu'à l'ennui*,"—and the author of *Pamela* has plainly disregarded this useful law. On the other hand, the tedium and elaboration of his style have tended, in these less leisurely days, to condemn his work to a neglect which it does not deserve. Few writers—it is a truism to say so—have excelled him in minute analysis of motive, and knowledge of the human heart. About the final morality of his heroine's long-drawn defence of her chastity it may, however, be permitted to doubt; and,

in contrasting the book with Fielding's work, it should not be forgotten that, irreproachable though it seemed to the author's admirers, good Dr. Watts complained (and with reason) of the indelicacy of some of the scenes.

But, for the moment, we are more concerned with the effect which *Pamela* produced upon Henry Fielding, struggling with the "eternal want of pence, which vexes public men," and vaguely hoping for some profitable opening for powers which had not yet been satisfactorily exercised. To his robust and masculine genius, never very delicately sensitive where the relations of the sexes are concerned, the strange conjunction of purity and precaution in Richardson's heroine was a thing unnatural, and a theme for inextinguishable Homeric laughter. That Pamela, through all her trials, could really have cherished any affection for her unscrupulous admirer would seem to him a sentimental absurdity, and the unprecedented success of the book would sharpen his sense of its assailable side. Possibly, too, his acquaintance with Richardson, whom he knew personally, but with whom he could have had no kind of sympathy, disposed him against his work. In any case, the idea presently occurred to Fielding of depicting a young man in circumstances of similar importunity at the hands of a dissolute woman of fashion. He took for his hero Pamela's brother, and by a malicious stroke of the pen turned the Mr. B. of *Pamela* into Squire Booby. But the process of invention rapidly carried him into paths far beyond the mere parody of Richardson, and it is only in the first portion of the book that he really remembers his intention. After chapter x. the story follows its natural course, and there is little or nothing of Lady

Booby, or her frustrate amours. Indeed, the author does not even pretend to preserve congruity as regards his hero, for, in chapter v., he makes him tell his mistress that he has never been in love, while in chapter xi. we are informed that he had long been attached to the charming Fanny. Moreover, in the intervening letters which Joseph writes to his sister Pamela, he makes no reference to this long-existent attachment, with which, one would think, she must have been perfectly familiar. These discrepancies all point, not so much to negligence on the part of the author, as to an unconscious transformation of his plan. He no doubt speedily found that mere ridicule of Richardson was insufficient to sustain the interest of any serious effort, and, besides, must have been secretly conscious that the "Pamela" characteristics of his hero were artistically irreconcilable with the personal bravery and cudgel-playing attributes with which he had endowed him. Add to this that the immortal Mrs. Slipslop and Parson Adams — the latter especially—had begun to acquire an importance with their creator for which the initial scheme had by no means provided; and he finally seems to have disregarded his design, only returning to it in his last chapters in order to close his work with some appearance of consistency. The *History of Joseph Andrews*, it has been said, might well have dispensed with Lady Booby altogether, and yet, without her, not only this book, but *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* also, would probably have been lost to us. The accident which prompted three such masterpieces cannot be honestly regretted.

It was not without reason that Fielding added prominently to his title-page the name of Mr. Abraham Adams

If he is not the real hero of the book, he is undoubtedly the character whose fortunes the reader follows with the closest interest. Whether he is smoking his black and consolatory pipe in the gallery of the inn, or losing his way while he meditates a passage of Greek, or groaning over the fatuities of the man-of-fashion in Leonora's story, or brandishing his famous crabstick in defence of Fanny, he is always the same delightful mixture of benevolence and simplicity, of pedantry and credulity and ignorance of the world. He is "compact," to use Shakespeare's word, of the oddest contradictions,—the most diverting eccentricities. He has Aristotle's *Politics* at his fingers' ends, but he knows nothing of the daily *Gazetteers;* he is perfectly familiar with the Pillars of Hercules, but he has never even heard of the Levant. He travels to London to sell a collection of sermons which he has forgotten to carry with him, and in a moment of excitement he tosses into the fire the copy of *Æschylus* which it has cost him years to transcribe. He gives irreproachable advice to Joseph on fortitude and resignation, but he is overwhelmed with grief when his child is reported to be drowned. When he speaks upon faith and works, on marriage, on school discipline, he is weighty and sensible; but he falls an easy victim to the plausible professions of every rogue he meets, and is willing to believe in the principles of Mr. Peter Pounce, or the humanity of Parson Trulliber. Not all the discipline of hog's blood and cudgels and cold water to which he is subjected can deprive him of his native dignity; and as he stands before us in the short great-coat under which his ragged cassock is continually making its appearance, with his old wig and battered hat, a clergy-

man whose social position is scarcely above that of a footman, and who supports a wife and six children upon a cure of twenty-three pounds a year, which his outspoken honesty is continually jeopardising, he is a far finer figure than Pamela in her coach-and-six, or Bellarmine in his cinnamon velvet. If not, as Mr. Lawrence says, with exaggerated enthusiasm, "the grandest delineation of a pattern-priest which the world has yet seen," he is assuredly a noble example of primitive goodness and practical Christianity. It is certain—as Mr. Forster and Mr. Keightley have pointed out—that Goldsmith borrowed some of his characteristics for Dr. Primrose, and it has been suggested that Sterne remembered him in more than one page of *Tristram Shandy*.

Next to Parson Adams, perhaps the best character in *Joseph Andrews*—though of an entirely different type—is Lady Booby's "Waiting-Gentlewoman," the excellent Mrs. Slipslop. Her sensitive dignity, her easy changes from servility to insolence, her sensuality, her inimitably distorted vocabulary, which Sheridan borrowed for Mrs. Malaprop, and Dickens modified for Mrs. Gamp, are all peculiarities which make up a personification of the richest humour and the most life-like reality. Mr. Peter Pounce, too, with his "scoundrel maxims," as disclosed in that remarkable dialogue which is said to be "better worth reading than all the Works of *Colley Cibber*," and in which charity is defined as consisting rather in a disposition to relieve distress than in an actual act of relief; Parson Trulliber with his hogs, his greediness, and his willingness to prove his Christianity by fisticuffs; shrewish Mrs. Tow-wouse with her scold's tongue, and her erring but perfectly subjugated husband,—these

again are portraits finished with admirable spirit and fidelity. Andrews himself, and his blushing sweetheart, do not lend themselves so readily to humorous art. Nevertheless the former, when freed from the wiles of Lady Booby, is by no means a despicable hero, and Fanny is a sufficiently fresh and blooming heroine. The characters of Pamela and Mr. Booby are fairly preserved from the pages of their original inventor. But when Fielding makes Parson Adams rebuke the pair for laughing in church at Joseph's wedding, and puts into the lady's mouth a sententious little speech upon her altered position in life, he is adding some ironical touches which Richardson would certainly have omitted.

No selection of personages, however, even of the most detailed and particular description, can convey any real impression of the mingled irony and insight, the wit and satire, the genial but perfectly remorseless revelation of human springs of action, which distinguish scene after scene of the book. Nothing, for example, can be more admirable than the different manifestations of meanness which take place among the travellers of the stage-coach, in the oft-quoted chapter where Joseph, having been robbed of everything, lies naked and bleeding in the ditch. There is Miss Grave-airs, who protests against the indecency of his entering the vehicle, but like a certain lady in the *Rake's Progress*, holds the sticks of her fan before her face while he does so, and who is afterwards found to be carrying Nantes under the guise of Hungary-water; there is the lawyer who advises that the wounded man shall be taken in, not from any humane motive, but because he is afraid of being involved in legal proceedings if they leave him to his fate;

there is the wit who seizes the occasion for a burst of facetious *double-entendres*, chiefly designed for the discomfiture of the prude; and, lastly, there is the coachman, whose only concern is the shilling for his fare, and who refuses to lend either of the useless greatcoats he is sitting upon, lest "they should be made bloody," leaving the shivering suppliant to be clothed by the generosity of the postilion ("a Lad," says Fielding with a fine touch of satire, "who hath been since transported for robbing a Hen-roost"). This worthy fellow accordingly strips off his only outer garment, "at the same time swearing a great Oath," for which he is duly rebuked by the passengers, "that he would rather ride in his Shirt all his Life, than suffer a Fellow-Creature to lie in so miserable a Condition." Then there are the admirable scenes which succeed Joseph's admission into the inn; the discussion between the bookseller and the two parsons as to the publication of Adams's sermons, which the "Clergy would be certain to cry down," because they inculcate good works against faith; the debate before the justice as to the manuscript of Æschylus, which is mistaken for one of the Fathers; and the pleasant discourse between the poet and the player which, beginning by compliments, bids fair to end in blows. Nor are the stories of Leonora and Mr. Wilson without their interest. They interrupt the straggling narrative far less than the Man of the Hill interrupts *Tom Jones*, and they afford an opportunity for varying the epic of the highway by pictures of polite society which could not otherwise be introduced. There can be little doubt, too, that some of Mr. Wilson's town experiences were the reflection of the author's own career; while the charac-

teristics of Leonora's lover Horatio,—who was "a young Gentleman of a good Family, bred to the Law," and recently called to the Bar, whose "Face and Person were such as the Generality allowed handsome: but he had a Dignity in his Air very rarely to be seen," and who "had Wit and Humour, with an Inclination to Satire, which he indulged rather too much"—read almost like a complimentary description of Fielding himself.

Like Hogarth, in that famous drinking scene to which reference has already been made, Fielding was careful to disclaim any personal portraiture in *Joseph Andrews*. In the opening chapter of Book iii. he declares "once for all that he describes not Men, but Manners; not an Individual, but a Species," although he admits that his characters are "taken from Life." In his "Preface," he reiterates this profession, adding that in copying from nature, he has "used the utmost Care to obscure the Persons by such different Circumstances, Degrees, and Colours, that it will be impossible to guess at them with any degree of certainty." Nevertheless—as in Hogarth's case—neither his protests nor his skill have prevented some of those identifications which are so seductive to the curious; and it is generally believed,—indeed, it was expressly stated by Richardson and others,—that the prototype of Parson Adams was a friend of Fielding, the Reverend William Young. Like Adams, he was a scholar and devoted to Æschylus; he resembled him, too, in his trick of snapping his fingers, and his habitual absence of mind. Of this latter peculiarity it is related that on one occasion, when a chaplain in Marlborough's wars, he strolled abstractedly into the enemy's lines with his beloved

Æschylus in his hand. His peaceable intentions were so unmistakable that he was instantly released, and politely directed to his regiment. Once, too, it is said, on being charged by a gentleman with sitting for the portrait of Adams, he offered to knock the speaker down, thereby supplying additional proof of the truth of the allegation. He died in August 1757, and is buried in the Chapel of Chelsea Hospital. The obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* describes him as "late of Gillingham, Dorsetshire," which would make him a neighbour of the novelist.[1] Another tradition connects Mr. Peter Pounce with the scrivener and usurer Peter Walter, whom Pope had satirised, and whom Hogarth is thought to have introduced into Plate i. of Marriage *à-la-Mode*. His sister lived at Salisbury; and he himself had an estate at Stalbridge Park, which was close to East Stour. From references to Walter in the *Champion* for May 31, 1740, as well as in the *Essay on Conversation*, it is clear that Fielding knew him personally, and disliked him. He may, indeed, have been among those county magnates whose criticism was so objectionable to Captain Booth during his brief residence in Dorsetshire. Parson Trulliber, also, according to Murphy, was Fielding's first tutor —Mr. Oliver of Motcombe. But his widow denied the resemblance; and it is hard to believe that this portrait is not overcharged. In all these cases, however, there is no reason for supposing that Fielding may not have thoroughly believed in the sincerity of his attempts to avoid the exact reproduction of actual persons, although, rightly or wrongly, his present-

[1] Lord Thurlow was accustomed to find a later likeness to Fielding's hero in his *protégé*, the poet Crabbe.

ments were speedily identified. With ordinary people it is by salient characteristics that a likeness is established; and no variation of detail, however skilful, greatly affects this result. In our own days we have seen that, in spite of both authors, the public declined to believe that the Harold Skimpole of Charles Dickens, and George Eliot's Dinah Morris, were not perfectly recognisable copies of living originals.

Upon its title-page, *Joseph Andrews* is declared to be "written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes," and there is no doubt that, in addition to being subjected to an unreasonable amount of ill-usage, Parson Adams has manifest affinities with Don Quixote. Scott, however, seems to have thought that Scarron's *Roman Comique* was the real model, so far as mock-heroic was concerned; but he must have forgotten that Fielding was already the author of *Tom Thumb*, and that Swift had written the *Battle of the Books*. Resemblances —not of much moment—have also been traced to the *Paysan Parvenu* and the *Histoire de Marianne* of Marivaux. With both these books Fielding was familiar; in fact, he expressly mentions them, as well as the *Roman Comique*, in the course of his story, and they doubtless exercised more or less influence upon his plan. But in the Preface, from which we have already quoted, he describes that plan; and this, because it is something definite, is more interesting than any speculation as to his determining models. After marking the division of the Epic, like the Drama, into Tragedy and Comedy, he points out that it may exist in prose as well as verse, and he proceeds to explain that what he has attempted in *Joseph Andrews* is "a comic Epic-Poem in Prose,"

differing from serious romance in its substitution of a light and ridiculous" fable for a "grave and solemn" one, of inferior characters for those of superior rank, and of ludicrous for sublime sentiments. Sometimes in the diction he has admitted burlesque, but never in the sentiments and characters, where, he contends, it would be out of place. He further defines the only source of the ridiculous to be affectation, of which the chief causes are vanity and hypocrisy. Whether this scheme was an after-thought it is difficult to say; but it is certainly necessary to a proper understanding of the author's method — a method which was to find so many imitators. Another passage in the Preface is worthy of remark. With reference to the pictures of vice which the book contains, he observes: "First, That it is very difficult to pursue a Series of human Actions, and keep clear from them. Secondly, That the Vices to be found here [*i.e.* in *Joseph Andrews*] are rather the accidental Consequences of some human Frailty, or Foible, than Causes habitually existing in the Mind. Thirdly, That they are never set forth as the Objects of Ridicule but Detestation. Fourthly, That they are never the principal Figure at the Time on the Scene; and, lastly, they never produce the intended Evil." In reading some pages of Fielding it is not always easy to see that he has strictly adhered to these principles; but it is well to recall them occasionally, as constituting at all events the code that he desired to follow.

Although the popularity of Fielding's first novel was considerable, it did not, to judge by the number of editions, at once equal the popularity of the book by which it was suggested. *Pamela*, as we have seen,

speedily ran through four editions; but it was six months before Millar published the second and revised edition of *Joseph Andrews;* and the third did not appear until more than a year after the date of first publication. With Richardson, as might be expected, it was never popular at all, and to a great extent it is possible to sympathise with his annoyance. The daughter of his brain, whom he had piloted through so many troubles, had grown to him more real than the daughters of his body, and to see her at the height of her fame made contemptible by what in one of his letters he terms "a lewd and ungenerous engraftment," must have been a sore trial to his absorbed and self-conscious nature, and one which not all the consolations of his consistory of feminine flatterers—"my ladies," as the little man called them—could wholly alleviate. But it must be admitted that his subsequent attitude was neither judicious nor dignified. He pursued Fielding henceforth with steady depreciation, caught eagerly at any scandal respecting him, professed himself unable to perceive his genius, deplored his "lowness," and comforted himself by reflecting that, if he pleased at all, it was because he had learned the art from *Pamela.* Of Fielding's other contemporary critics, one only need be mentioned here, more on account of his literary eminence than of the special felicity of his judgment. "I have myself," writes Gray to West, "upon your recommendation, been reading Joseph Andrews. The incidents are ill laid and without invention; but the characters have a great deal of nature, which always pleases even in her lowest shapes. Parson Adams is perfectly well; so is Mrs. Slipslop, and the story of

Wilson; and throughout he [*the author*] shews himself well read in Stage-Coaches, Country Squires, Inns, and Inns of Court. His reflections upon high people and low people, and misses and masters, are very good. However the exaltedness of some minds (or rather as I shrewdly suspect their insipidity and want of feeling or observation) may make them insensible to these light things, (I mean such as characterise and paint nature) yet surely they are as weighty and much more useful than your grave discourses upon the mind, the passions, and what not." And thereupon follows that fantastic utterance concerning the romances of MM. Marivaux and Crébillon *fils*, which has disconcerted so many of Gray's admirers. We suspect that any reader who should nowadays contrast the sickly and sordid intrigue of the *Paysan Parvenu* with the healthy animalism of *Joseph Andrews* would greatly prefer the latter. Yet Gray's verdict, though cold, is not undiscriminating, and is perhaps as much as one could expect from his cloistered and fastidious taste.

Various anecdotes, all more or less apocryphal, have been related respecting the first appearance of *Joseph Andrews*, and the sum paid to the author for the copyright. A reference to the original assignment, now in the Forster Library at South Kensington, definitely settles the latter point. The amount in "lawful Money of Great Britain," received by "Henry Fielding, Esq." from "Andrew Millar of St. Clement's Danes in the Strand," was £183 : 11s. In this document, as in the order to Nourse of which a *facsimile* is given by Roscoe, both the author's name and signature are written with the old-fashioned double f, and he calls himself "Field-

ing" and not "Feilding," like the rest of the Denbigh family. If we may trust an anecdote given by Kippis, Lord Denbigh once asked his kinsman the reason of this difference. "I cannot tell, my lord," returned the novelist, "unless it be that my branch of the family was the first that learned to spell." In connection with this assignment, however, what is perhaps even more interesting than these discrepancies is the fact that one of the witnesses was William Young. Thus we have Parson Adams acting as witness to the sale of the very book which he had helped to immortalise.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MISCELLANIES—JONATHAN WILD.

In March 1742, according to an article in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, attributed to Samuel Johnson, "the most popular Topic of Conversation" was the *Account of the Conduct of the Dowager Dutchess of Marlborough, from her first coming to Court, to the Year* 1710, which, with the help of Hooke of the *Roman History*, the "terrible old Sarah" had just put forth. Among the little cloud of *Sarah-Ads* and *Old Wives' Tales* evoked by this production, was a *Vindication* of her Grace by Fielding, specially prompted, as appears from the title-page, by the "late *scurrilous* Pamphlet" of a "noble Author." If this were not acknowledged to be from Fielding's pen in the Preface to the *Miscellanies* (in which collection, however, it is not reprinted), its authorship would be sufficiently proved by its being included with *Miss Lucy in Town* in the assignment to Andrew Millar referred to at the close of the preceding chapter. The price Millar paid for it was £5 : 5s., or exactly half that of the farce. But it is only reasonable to assume that the Duchess herself (who is said to have given Hooke £5000 for his help) also rewarded her champion. Whether Fielding's

admiration for the "glorious Woman" in whose cause he had drawn his pen was genuine, or whether—to use Johnson's convenient euphemism concerning Hooke —"he was acting only ministerially," are matters for speculation. His father, however, had served under the Duke, and there may have been a traditional attachment to the Churchills on the part of his family. It has even been ingeniously suggested that Sarah Fielding was her Grace's god-child;[1] but as her mother's name was also Sarah, no importance can be attached to the suggestion.

Miss Lucy in Town, as its sub-title explains, was a sequel to the *Virgin Unmask'd*, and was produced at Drury Lane in May 1742. As already stated in chapter ii., Fielding's part in it was small. It is a lively but not very creditable trifle, which turns upon certain equivocal London experiences of the Miss Lucy of the earlier piece; and it seems to have been chiefly intended to afford an opportunity for some clever imitation of the reigning Italian singers by Mrs. Clive and the famous tenor Beard. Horace Walpole, who refers to it in a letter to Mann, between an account of the opening of Ranelagh and an anecdote of Mrs. Bracegirdle, calls it "a little simple farce," and says that "Mrs. Clive mimics the Muscovita admirably, and Beard Amorevoli tolerably." Mr. Walpole detested the Muscovita, and adored Amorevoli, which perhaps accounts for the nice discrimination shown in his praise. One of the other characters, Mr. Zorobabel, a Jew, was taken by Macklin, and from another, Mrs. Haycock (afterwards changed to Mrs. Midnight), Foote is supposed to have

[1] *Memoirs of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*, etc., by Mrs. A. T. Thomson, 1839.

borrowed Mother Cole in *The Minor*. A third character, Lord Bawble, was considered to reflect upon "a particular person of quality," and the piece was speedily forbidden by the Lord Chamberlain, although it appears to have been acted a few months later without opposition. One of the results of the prohibition, according to Mr. Lawrence, was a *Letter to a Noble Lord* (the Lord Chamberlain) . . . *occasioned by a Representation . . . of a Farce called "Miss Lucy in Town."* This, in spite of the Caveat in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, he ascribes to Fielding, and styles it "a sharp expostulation . . . in which he [Fielding] disavowed any idea of a personal attack." But Mr. Lawrence must plainly have been misinformed on the subject, for the pamphlet bears little sign of Fielding's hand. As far as it is intelligible, it is rather against Miss Lucy than for her, and it makes no reference to Lord Bawble's original. The name of this injured patrician seems indeed never to have transpired; but he could scarcely have been in any sense an exceptional member of the Georgian aristocracy.

In the same month that *Miss Lucy in Town* appeared at Drury Lane, Millar published it in book form. In the following June, T. Waller of the Temple-Cloisters issued the first of a contemplated series of translations from Aristophanes by Henry Fielding, Esq., and the Rev. William Young who sat for Parson Adams. The play chosen was *Plutus, the God of Riches*, and a notice upon the original cover stated that, according to the reception it met with from the public, it would be followed by the others. It must be presumed that "the distressed, and at present, declining State of

Learning" to which the authors referred in their dedication to Lord Talbot, was not a mere form of speech, for the enterprise does not seem to have met with sufficient encouragement to justify its continuance, and this special rendering has long since been supplanted by the more modern versions of Mitchell, Frere, and others. Whether Fielding took any large share in it is not now discernible. It is most likely, however, that the bulk of the work was Young's, and that his colleague did little more than furnish the Preface, which is partly written in the first person, and betrays its origin by a sudden and not very relevant attack upon the "pretty, dapper, brisk, smart, pert Dialogue" of Modern Comedy into which the "infinite Wit" of Wycherley had degenerated under Cibber. It also contains a compliment to the numbers of the "inimitable Author" of the *Essay on Man*.

This is the second compliment which Fielding had paid to Pope within a brief period, the first having been that in the *Champion* respecting the translation of the *Iliad*. What his exact relations with the author of the *Dunciad* were, has never been divulged. At first they seem to have been rather hostile than friendly. Fielding had ridiculed the Romish Church in the *Old Debauchees*, a course which Pope could scarcely have approved; and he was, moreover, the cousin of Lady Mary, now no longer throned in the Twickenham Temple. Pope had commented upon a passage in *Tom Thumb*, and Fielding had indirectly referred to Pope in the *Covent Garden Tragedy*. When it had been reported that Pope had gone to see *Pasquin*, the statement had been at once contradicted. But

Fielding was now, like Pope, against Walpole; and *Joseph Andrews* had been published. It may therefore be that the compliments in *Plutus* and the *Champion* were the result of some *rapprochement* between the two. It is, nevertheless, curious that, at this very time, an attempt appears to have been made to connect the novelist with the controversy which presently arose out of Cibber's well-known letter to Pope. In August 1742, the month following its publication, among the pamphlets to which it gave rise, was announced *The Cudgel; or, a Crab-tree Lecture. To the Author of the Dunciad.* "By Hercules Vinegar, Esq." This very mediocre satire in verse is still to be found at the British Museum; but even if it were not included in Fielding's general disclaimer as to unsigned work, it would be difficult to connect it with him. To give but one reason, it would make him the ally and adherent of Cibber,—which is absurd. In all probability, like another Grub Street squib under the same pseudonym, it was by Ralph, who had already attacked Pope, and continued to maintain the Captain's character in the *Champion* long after Fielding had ceased to write for it. It is even possible that Ralph had some share in originating the Vinegar family, for it is noticeable that the paper in which they are first introduced bears no initials. In this case he would consider himself free to adopt the name, however disadvantageous that course might be to Fielding's reputation. And it is clear that, whatever their relations had been in the past, they were for the time on opposite sides in politics, since while Fielding had been vindicating the Duchess of Marlborough, Ralph had been writing against her.

These, however, are minor questions, the discussion of which would lead too far from the main narrative of Fielding's life. In the same letter in which Walpole had referred to *Miss Lucy in Town*, he had spoken of the success of a new player at Goodman's Fields, after whom all the town, in Gray's phrase, was "horn-mad;" but in whose acting Mr. Walpole, with a critical distrust of novelty, saw nothing particularly wonderful. This was David Garrick. He had been admitted a student of Lincoln's Inn a year before Fielding entered the Middle Temple, had afterwards turned wine-merchant, and was now delighting London by his versatility in comedy, tragedy, and farce. One of his earliest theatrical exploits, according to Sir John Hawkins, had been a private representation of Fielding's *Mock-Doctor*, in a room over the St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, so long familiar to subscribers of the *Gentleman's Magazine;* his fellow-actors being Cave's journeymen printers, and his audience Cave, Johnson, and a few friends. After this he appears to have made the acquaintance of Fielding; and late in 1742, applied to him to know if he had "any Play by him," as "he was desirous of appearing in a new Part." As a matter of fact Fielding had two plays by him—the *Good-natured Man* (a title subsequently used by Goldsmith), and a piece called *The Wedding Day*. The former was almost finished: the latter was an early work, being indeed "the third Dramatic Performance he ever attempted." The necessary arrangements having been made with Mr. Fleetwood, the manager of Drury Lane, Fielding set to work to complete the *Good-natured Man*, which he considered the better of the two. When he had done so, he came to

the conclusion that it required more attention than he could give it ; and moreover, that the part allotted to Garrick, although it satisfied the actor, was scarcely important enough. He accordingly reverted to the *Wedding Day*, the central character of which had been intended for Wilks. It had many faults which none saw more clearly than the author himself, but he hoped that Garrick's energy and *prestige* would triumphantly surmount all obstacles. He hoped, as well, to improve it by revision. The dangerous illness of his wife, however, made it impossible for him to execute his task; and, as he was pressed for money, the *Wedding Day* was produced on the 17th of February 1743, apparently much as it had been first written some dozen years before. As might be anticipated, it was not a success. The character of Millamour is one which it is hard to believe that even Garrick could have made attractive, and though others of the parts were entrusted to Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Pritchard, and Macklin, it was acted but six nights. The author's gains were under £50. In the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, from which most of the foregoing account is taken, Fielding, as usual, refers its failure to other causes than its inherent defects. Rumours, he says, had been circulated as to its indecency (and in truth some of the scenes are more than hazardous) ; but it had passed the licenser, and must be supposed to have been up to the moral standard of the time. Its unfavourable reception, as Fielding must have known in his heart, was due to its artistic shortcomings, and also to the fact that a change was taking place in the public taste. It is in connection with the *Wedding Day* that one of the best-known anecdotes of the author is related.

Garrick had begged him to retrench a certain objectionable passage. This Fielding, either from indolence or unwillingness, declined to do, asserting that if it was not good, the audience might find it out. The passage was promptly hissed, and Garrick returned to the green-room, where the author was solacing himself with a bottle of champagne. "What is the matter, Garrick?" said he to the flustered actor; "what are they hissing now?" He was informed with some heat that they had been hissing the very scene he had been asked to withdraw, "and," added Garrick, "they have so frightened me, that I shall not be able to collect myself again the whole night."—"Oh!" answered the author, with an oath, "they HAVE found it out, have they?" This rejoinder is usually quoted as an instance of Fielding's contempt for the intelligence of his audience; but nine men in ten, it may be observed, would have said something of the same sort.

The only other thing which need be referred to in connection with this comedy—the last of his own dramatic works which Fielding ever witnessed upon the stage—is Macklin's doggerel Prologue. Mr. Lawrence attributes this to Fielding; but he seems to have overlooked the fact that in the *Miscellanies* it is headed, "*Writ* and Spoken by Mr. Macklin," which gives it more interest as the work of an outsider than if it had been a mere laugh by the author at himself. Garrick is represented as too busy to speak the prologue; and Fielding, who has been "drinking to raise his Spirits," has begged Macklin with his "long, dismal, Mercy-begging Face," to go on and apologise. Macklin then pretends to recognise him among the audience, and pokes fun at

his anxieties, telling him that he had better have stuck to "honest *Abram Adams*," who, "in spight of Critics, can make his Readers laugh." The words "in spite of critics" indicate another distinction between Fielding's novels and plays, which should have its weight in any comparison of them. The censors of the pit, in the eighteenth century, seem to have exercised an unusual influence in deciding whether a play should succeed or not;[1] and, from Fielding's frequent references to friends and enemies, it would almost seem as if he believed their suffrages to be more important than a good plot and a witty dialogue. On the other hand, no coterie of Wits and Templars could kill a book like *Joseph Andrews*. To say nothing of the opportunities afforded by the novel for more leisurely character-drawing, and greater by-play of reflection and description—its reader was an isolated and independent judge; and in the long run the difference told wonderfully in favour of the author. Macklin was obviously right in recommending Fielding, even in jest, to stick to Parson Adams, and from the familiar publicity of the advice it may also be inferred, not only that the opinion was one commonly current, but that the novel was unusually popular.

The *Wedding Day* was issued separately in February 1743. It must therefore be assumed that the three volumes of *Miscellanies*, by Henry Fielding, Esq., in which it was reprinted, and to which reference has so often been made in these pages, did not appear until

[1] Miller's *Coffee-House*, 1737, for example, was damned by the Templars because it was supposed to reflect on the keepers of "Dick's."—(*Biog. Dramatica.*)

later.[1] They were published by subscription; and the list, in addition to a large number of aristocratic and legal names, contains some of more permanent interest. Side by side with the Chesterfields and Marlboroughs and Burlingtons and Denbighs, come William Pitt and Henry Fox, Esqs., with Dodington and Winnington and Hanbury Williams. The theatrical world is well represented by Garrick and Mrs. Woffington and Mrs. Clive. Literature has no names of any eminence except that of Young; for Savage and Whitehead, Mallet and Benjamin Hoadly, are certainly *ignes minores*. Pope is conspicuous for his absence; so also are Horace Walpole and Gray, while Richardson, of course, is wanting. Johnson, as yet only the author of *London*, and journeyman to Cave, could scarcely be expected in the roll; and, in any case, his friendship for the author of *Pamela* would probably have kept him away. Among some other well-known eighteenth century names are those of Dodsley and Millar the booksellers, and the famous Vauxhall *impresario* Jonathan Tyers.

The first volume of the *Miscellanies*, besides a lengthy Preface, includes the author's poems, essays *On Conversation*, *On the Knowledge of the Characters of Men*, *On Nothing*, a squib upon the transactions of the Royal Society, a translation from Demosthenes, and one or two minor pieces. Much of the biographical material contained in the Preface has already been made use of, as well as those verses which can be definitely dated, or which relate to the author's love-affairs. The hitherto unnoticed portions of the volume consist

[1] By advertisement in the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, they would seem to have been published early in April 1743.

chiefly of Epistles, in the orthodox eighteenth century fashion. One—already referred to—is headed *Of True Greatness;* another, inscribed to the Duke of Richmond, *Of Good-nature;* while a third is addressed to a friend *On the Choice of a Wife.* This last contains some sensible lines, but although Roscoe has managed to extract two quotable passages, it is needless to imitate him here. These productions show no trace of the authentic Fielding. The essays are more remarkable, although, like Montaigne's, they are scarcely described by their titles. That on *Conversation* is really a little treatise on good breeding; that on the *Characters of Men*, a lay sermon against Fielding's pet antipathy —hypocrisy. Nothing can well be wiser, even now, than some of the counsels in the former of these papers on such themes as the limits of raillery, the duties of hospitality, and the choice of subject in general conversation. Nor, however threadbare they may look to-day, can the final conclusions be reasonably objected to:—"First, That every Person who indulges his Ill-nature or Vanity, at the Expense of others; and in introducing Uneasiness, Vexation, and Confusion into Society, however exalted or high-titled he may be, is thoroughly ill-bred;" and "Secondly, That whoever, from the Goodness of his Disposition or Understanding, endeavours to his utmost to cultivate the Good-humour and Happiness of others, and to contribute to the Ease and Comfort of all his Acquaintance, however low in Rank Fortune may have placed him, or however clumsy he may be in his Figure or Demeanour, hath, in the truest sense of the Word, a Claim to Good-Breeding." One fancies that this essay must have been a favourite with

the historian of the *Book of Snobs* and the creator of Major Dobbin.

The *Characters of Men* is not equal to the *Conversation*. The theme is a wider one; and the end proposed,—that of supplying rules for detecting the real disposition through all the social disguises which cloak and envelop it,—can scarcely be said to be attained. But there are happy touches even in this; and when the author says —"I will venture to affirm, that I have known some of *the best sort of Men in the World* (to use the vulgar Phrase,) who would not have scrupled cutting a Friend's Throat; and a *Fellow whom no Man should be seen to speak to*, capable of the highest Acts of Friendship and Benevolence," one recognises the hand that made the sole good Samaritan in *Joseph Andrews* "a Lad who hath since been transported for robbing a Hen-roost." The account of the Terrestrial Chrysipus or Guinea, a burlesque on a paper read before the Royal Society on the Fresh Water Polypus, is chiefly interesting from the fact that it is supposed to be written by Petrus Gualterus (Peter Walter), who had an "extraordinary Collection" of them. He died, in fact, worth £300,000. The only other paper in the volume of any value is a short one *Of the Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of our Friends*, to which we shall presently return.

The farce of *Eurydice*, and the *Wedding Day*, which, with *A Journey from this World to the Next*, etc., make up the contents of the second volume of the *Miscellanies*, have been already sufficiently discussed. But the *Journey* deserves some further notice. It has been suggested that this curious Lucianic production may have been prompted by the vision of Mercury and Charon in the

Champion, though the kind of allegory of which it consists is common enough with the elder essayists; and it is notable that another book was published in April 1743, under the title of *Cardinal Fleury's Journey to the other World*, which is manifestly suggested by Quevedo. Fielding's *Journey*, however, is a fragment which the author feigns to have found in the garret of a stationer in the Strand. Sixteen out of five-and-twenty chapters in Book i. are occupied with the transmigrations of Julian the Apostate, which are not concluded. Then follows another chapter from Book xix., which contains the history of Anna Boleyn, and the whole breaks off abruptly. Its best portion is undoubtedly the first ten chapters, which relate the writer's progress to Elysium, and afford opportunity for many strokes of satire. Such are the whimsical terror of the spiritual traveller in the stage-coach, who hears suddenly that his neighbour has died of smallpox, a disease he had been dreading all his life; and the punishment of Lord Scrape, the miser, who is doomed to dole out money to all comers, and who, after "being purified in the Body of a Hog," is ultimately to return to earth again. Nor is the delight of some of those who profit by his enforced assistance less keenly realised:—"I remarked a poetical Spirit in particular, who swore he would have a hearty Gripe at him: 'For, says he, the Rascal not only refused to subscribe to my Works; but sent back my Letter unanswered, tho' I'm a better Gentleman than himself.'" The descriptions of the City of Diseases, the Palace of Death, and the Wheel of Fortune from which men draw their chequered lots, are all unrivalled in their way. But here, as always, it is in his pictures of human nature that Fielding shines,

and it is this that makes the chapters in which Minos is shown adjudicating upon the separate claims of the claimants to enter Elysium the most piquant of all. The virtuoso and butterfly hunter, who is repulsed "with great Scorn;" the dramatic author who is admitted (to his disgust), not on account of his works, but because he has once lent "the whole Profits of a Benefit Night to a Friend;" the parson who is turned back, while his poor parishioners are admitted; and the trembling wretch who has been hanged for a robbery of eighteen-pence, to which he had been driven by poverty, but whom the judge welcomes cordially because he had been a kind father, husband, and son; all these are conceived in that humane and generous spirit which is Fielding's most engaging characteristic. The chapter immediately following, which describes the literary and other inhabitants of Elysium, is even better. Here is Leonidas, who appears to be only moderately gratified with the honour recently done him by Mr. Glover the poet; here is Homer, toying with Madam Dacier, and profoundly indifferent as to his birth-place and the continuity of his poems; here, too, is Shake-speare, who, foreseeing future commentators and the "New Shakespere Society," declines to enlighten Betterton and Booth as to a disputed passage in his works, adding, "I marvel nothing so much as that Men will gird themselves at discovering obscure Beauties in an Author. Certes the greatest and most pregnant Beauties are ever the plainest and most evidently striking; and when two Meanings of a Passage can in the least ballance our Judge-ments which to prefer, I hold it matter of unquestionable Certainty that neither is worth a farthing." Then, again, there are Addison and Steele, who are described with so

pleasant a knowledge of their personalities that, although the passage has been often quoted, there seems to be no reason why it should not be quoted once more :—

"*Virgil* then came up to me, with Mr. *Addison* under his Arm. Well, Sir, said he, how many Translations have these few last Years produced of my *Æneid?* I told him, I believed several, but I could not possibly remember ; for I had never read any but Dr. *Trapp's.*[1]—Ay, said he, that is a curious Piece indeed ! I then acquainted him with the Discovery made by Mr. *Warburton* of the *Eleusinian* Mysteries couched in his 6th book. What Mysteries ? said Mr. *Addison.* The *Eleusinian,* answered *Virgil,* which I have disclosed in my 6th Book. How ! replied *Addison.* You never mentioned a word of any such Mysteries to me in all our Acquaintance. I thought it was unnecessary, cried the other, to a Man of your infinite Learning : besides, you always told me, you perfectly understood my meaning. Upon this I thought the Critic looked a little out of countenance, and turned aside to a very merry Spirit, one *Dick Steele,* who embraced him, and told him, He had been the greatest Man upon Earth ; that he readily resigned up all the Merit of his own Works to him. Upon which, *Addison* gave him a gracious Smile, and clapping him on the Back with much Solemnity, cried out, *Well said, Dick.*"

After encountering these and other notabilities, including Tom Thumb and Livy, the latter of whom takes occasion to commend the ingenious performances of Lady Marlborough's assistant, Mr. Hooke, the author meets with Julian the Apostate, and from this point the narrative grows languid. Its unfinished condition may perhaps be accepted as a proof that Fielding himself had wearied of his scheme.

The third volume of the *Miscellanies* is wholly occupied with the remarkable work entitled the *History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great.* As in the

[1] Dr. Trapp's translation of the *Æneid* was published in 1718.

case of the *Journey from this World to the Next*, it is not unlikely that the first germ of this may be found in the pages of the *Champion*. "Reputation"—says Fielding in one of the essays in that periodical—"often courts those most who regard her the least. Actions have sometimes been attended with Fame, which were undertaken in Defiance of it. *Jonathan Wyld* himself had for many years no small Share of it in this Kingdom." The book now under consideration is the elaboration of the idea thus casually thrown out. Under the name of a notorious thief-taker hanged at Tyburn in 1725, Fielding has traced the Progress of a Rogue to the Gallows, showing by innumerable subtle touches that the (so-called) greatness of a villain does not very materially differ from any other kind of greatness, which is equally independent of goodness. This continually suggested affinity between the ignoble and the pseudo-noble is the text of the book. Against genuine worth (its author is careful to explain) his satire is in no wise directed. He is far from considering "*Newgate* as no other than Human Nature with its Mask off;" but he thinks "we may be excused for suspecting, that the splendid Palaces of the Great are often no other than *Newgate* with the Mask on." Thus *Jonathan Wild the Great* is a prolonged satire upon the spurious eminence in which benevolence, honesty, charity, and the like have no part; or, as Fielding prefers to term it, that false or "Bombast greatness" which is so often mistaken for the "*true Sublime* in Human Nature"—Greatness and Goodness combined. So thoroughly has he explained his intention in the Prefaces to the *Miscellanies*, and to the book itself, that it is difficult to

comprehend how Scott could fail to see his drift. Possibly, like some others, he found the subject repugnant and painful to his kindly nature. Possibly, too, he did not, for this reason, study the book very carefully, for, with the episode of Heartfree under one's eyes, it is not strictly accurate to say (as he does) that it presents "a picture of complete vice, *unrelieved by any thing of human feeling*, and never by any accident even deviating into virtue." If the author's introduction be borne in mind, and if the book be read steadily in the light there supplied, no one can refrain from admiring the extraordinary skill and concentration with which the plan is pursued, and the adroitness with which, at every turn, the villainy of Wild is approximated to that of those securer and more illustrious criminals with whom he is so seldom confused. And Fielding has never carried one of his chief and characteristic excellences to so great perfection: the book is a model of sustained and sleepless irony. To make any extracts from it—still less to make any extracts which should do justice to it, is almost impracticable; but the edifying discourse between Wild and Count La Ruse in Book i., and the pure comedy of that in Book iv. with the Ordinary of Newgate (who objects to wine, but drinks punch because "it is no where spoken against in Scripture"), as well as the account of the prison faction between Wild and Johnson,[1] with its

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admirable speech of the "grave Man" against Party, may all be cited as examples of its style and method. Nor should the character of Wild in the last chapter, and his famous rules of conduct, be neglected. It must be admitted, however, that the book is not calculated to suit the nicely-sensitive in letters; or, it may be added, those readers for whom the evolution of a purely intellectual conception is either unmeaning or uninteresting. Its place in Fielding's works is immediately after his three great novels, and this is more by reason of its subject than its workmanship, which could hardly be excelled. When it was actually composed is doubtful. If it may be connected with the already-quoted passage in the *Champion*, it must be placed after March 1740, which is the date of the paper; but, from a reference to Peter Pounce in Book ii., it might also be supposed to have been written after *Joseph Andrews*. The Bath simile in chapter xiv. Book i., makes it likely that some part of it was penned at that place, where, from an epigram in the *Miscellanies* "written *Extempore* in the Pump Room," it is clear that Fielding was staying in 1742. But, whenever it was completed, we are inclined to think that it was planned and begun before *Joseph Andrews* was published, as it is in the highest degree improbable that Fielding, always carefully watching the public taste, would have followed up that fortunate adventure in a new direction by a work so entirely different from it as *Jonathan Wild*.

Newgate: Nor do I see any Reason for introducing any allegory at all; unless we will agree that there are, without those Walls, some other Bodies of Men of worse Morals than those within; and who have, consequently, a Right to change Places with its present Inhabitants." The writer was probably Fielding.

A second edition of the *Miscellanies* appeared in the same year as the first, namely in 1743. From this date until the publication of *Tom Jones* in 1749, Fielding produced no work of signal importance, and his personal history for the next few years is exceedingly obscure. We are inclined to suspect that this must have been the most trying period of his career. His health was shattered, and he had become a martyr to gout, which seriously interfered with the active practice of his profession. Again, "about this time," says Murphy vaguely, after speaking of the *Wedding Day*, he lost his first wife. That she was alive in the winter of 1742-3 is clear, for, in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, he describes himself as being then laid up, "with a favourite Child dying in one Bed, and my Wife in a Condition very little better, on another, attended with other Circumstances, which served as very proper Decorations to such a Scene,"—by which Mr. Keightley no doubt rightly supposes him to refer to writs and bailiffs. It must also be assumed that Mrs. Fielding was alive when the Preface was written, since, in apologising for an apparent delay in publishing the book, he says the "real Reason" was "the dangerous Illness of one from whom I *draw* [the italics are ours] all the solid Comfort of my Life." There is another unmistakable reference to her in one of the minor papers in the first volume, viz. that *Of the Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of our Friends*. "I remember the most excellent of Women, and tenderest of Mothers, when, after a painful and dangerous Delivery, she was told she had a Daughter, answering; *Good God! have I produced a Creature who is to undergo what I have suffered!* Some Years afterwards, I heard the same Woman, on the

Death of that very Child, then one of the loveliest Creatures ever seen, comforting herself with reflecting, that *her Child could never know what it was to feel such a Loss as she then lamented.*" Were it not for the passages already quoted from the Preface, it might almost be concluded from the tone of the foregoing quotation and the final words of the paper, which refer to our meeting with those we have lost in Heaven, that Mrs. Fielding was already dead. But the use of the word "draw" in the Preface affords distinct evidence to the contrary. It is therefore most probable that she died in the latter part of 1743, having been long in a declining state of health. For a time her husband was inconsolable. "The fortitude of mind," says Murphy, "with which he met all the other calamities of life, deserted him on this most trying occasion." His grief was so vehement "that his friends began to think him in danger of losing his reason."

That Fielding had depicted his first wife in Sophia Western has already been pointed out, and we have the authority of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Richardson for saying that she was afterwards reproduced in *Amelia*. "Amelia," says the latter, in a letter to Mrs. Donnellan, "even to her *noselessness*, is again his first wife." Some of her traits, too, are to be detected in the Mrs. Wilson of *Joseph Andrews*. But, beyond these indications, we hear little about her. Almost all that is definitely known is contained in a passage of the admirable *Introductory Anecdotes* contributed by Lady Louisa Stuart in 1837 to Lord Wharncliffe's edition of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters and Works*. This account was based upon the recollections of Lady Bute, Lady Mary's daughter.

"Only those persons (says Lady Stuart) are mentioned here of whom Lady Bute could speak from her own recollection or her mother's report. Both had made her well informed of every particular that concerned her relation Henry Fielding; nor was she a stranger to that beloved first wife whose picture he drew in his Amelia, where, as she said, even the glowing language he knew how to employ did not do more than justice to the amiable qualities of the original, or to her beauty, although this had suffered a little from the accident related in the novel,—a frightful overturn, which destroyed the gristle of her nose.[1] He loved her passionately, and she returned his affection; yet led no happy life, for they were almost always miserably poor, and seldom in a state of quiet and safety. All the world knows what was his imprudence; if ever he possessed a score of pounds, nothing could keep him from lavishing it idly, or make him think of tomorrow. Sometimes they were living in decent lodgings with tolerable comfort; sometimes in a wretched garret without necessaries; not to speak of the spunging-houses and hiding-places where he was occasionally to be found. His

[1] That any one could have remained lovely after such a catastrophe is difficult to believe. But probably Lady Bute (or Lady Stuart) exaggerated its effects; for—to say nothing of the fact that, throughout the novel, Amelia's beauty is continually commended—in the delightfully feminine description which is given of her by Mrs. James in Book xi. chap. i., pp. 114-15 of the first edition of 1752, although she is literally pulled to pieces, there is no reference whatever to her nose, which may be taken as proof positive that it was not an assailable feature. Moreover, in the book as we now have it, Fielding, obviously in deference to contemporary criticism, inserted the following specific passages:—"She was, indeed, a most charming woman; and I know not whether the little scar on her nose did not rather add to, than diminish her beauty" (Book iv. chap. vii.); and in Mrs. James's portrait:—"Then her nose, as well proportioned as it is, has a visible scar on one side." No previous biographer seems to have thought it necessary to make any mention of these statements, while Johnson's speech about "That vile broken nose, *never cured*," and Richardson's coarsely-malignant utterance to Mrs. Donnellan, are everywhere industriously remembered and repeated.

elastic gaiety of spirit carried him through it all; but, meanwhile, care and anxiety were preying upon her more delicate mind, and undermining her constitution. She gradually declined, caught a fever, and died in his arms."

As usual, Mr. Keightley has done his best to test this statement to the utmost. Part of his examination may be neglected, because it is based upon the misconception that Lord Wharncliffe, Lady Mary's greatgrandson, and not Lady Stuart, her granddaughter, was the writer of the foregoing account. But as a set-off to the extreme destitution alleged, Mr. Keightley very justly observes that Mrs. Fielding must for some time have had a maid, since it was a maid who had been devotedly attached to her whom Fielding subsequently married. He also argues that "living in a garret and skulking in out o' the way retreats," are incompatible with studying law and practising as a barrister. Making every allowance, however, for the somewhat exaggerated way in which those of high rank often speak of the distresses of their less opulent kinsfolk, it is probable that Fielding's married life was one of continual shifts and privations. Such a state of things is completely in accordance with his profuse nature[1] and his precarious means. Of his family by the first Mrs. Fielding no very material particulars have been preserved. Writing, in November 1745, in the *True Patriot*, he speaks of having a son and a daughter, but no son by his first wife seems to have survived him. The late Colonel Chester found the burial of a "James Fielding, son of Henry Fielding," recorded under date of 19th February 1736, in the register of St. Giles in

[1] The passage as to his imprudence is, oddly enough, omitted from Mr. Keightley's quotation.

the Fields; but it is by no means certain that this entry refers to the novelist. A daughter, Eleanor Harriot, certainly did survive him, for she is mentioned in the *Voyage to Lisbon* as being of the party who accompanied him. Another daughter, as already stated, probably died in the winter of 1742-3; and the *Journey from this World to the Next* contains the touching reference to this or another child, of which Dickens writes so warmly in one of his letters. "I presently," says Fielding, speaking of his entrance into Elysium, "met a little Daughter, whom I had lost several Years before. Good Gods! what Words can describe the Raptures, the melting passionate Tenderness, with which we kiss'd each other, continuing in our Embrace, with the most extatic Joy, a Space, which if Time had been measured here as on Earth, could not have been less than half a Year."

From the death of Mrs. Fielding until the publication of the *True Patriot* in 1745 another comparative blank ensues in Fielding's history; and it can only be filled by the assumption that he was still endeavouring to follow his profession as a barrister. His literary work seems to have been confined to a Preface to the second edition of his sister's novel of *David Simple*, which appeared in 1744. This, while rendering fraternal justice to that now forgotten book, is memorable for some personal utterances on Fielding's part. In denying the authorship of *David Simple*, which had been attributed to him, he takes occasion to appeal against the injustice of referring anonymous works to his pen, in the face of his distinct engagement in the Preface to the *Miscellanies*, that he would thenceforth write nothing except over his own signature; and he complains that such a course has a

tendency to injure him in a profession to which "he has applied with so arduous and intent a diligence, that he has had no leisure, if he had inclination, to compose anything of this kind (i.e. *David Simple*)." At the same time, he formally withdraws his promise, since it has in no wise exempted him from the scandal of putting forth anonymous work. From other passages in this "Preface," it may be gathered the immediate cause of irritation was the assignment to his pen of "that infamous paultry libel" the *Causidicade*, a satire directed at the law in general, and some of the subscribers to the *Miscellanies* in particular. "This," he says, "accused me not only of being a bad writer, and a bad man, but with downright idiotism, in flying in the face of the greatest men of my profession." It may easily be conceived that such a report must be unfavourable to a struggling barrister, and Fielding's anxiety on this head is a strong proof that he was still hoping to succeed at the Bar. To a subsequent collection of *Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple and some others*, he supplied another preface three years later, together with five little-known epistles which, nevertheless, are not without evidence of his characteristic touch.

A life of ups and downs like Fielding's is seldom remarkable for its consistency. It is therefore not surprising to find that, despite his desire in 1744 to refrain from writing, he was again writing in 1745. The landing of Charles Edward attracted him once more into the ranks of journalism, on the side of the Government, and gave rise to the *True Patriot*, a weekly paper, the first number of which appeared in November. This, having come to an end with the

Rebellion, was succeeded in December 1747 by the *Jacobite's Journal*, supposed to emanate from "John Trott-Plaid, Esq.," and intended to push the discomfiture of Jacobite sentiment still further. It is needless to discuss these mainly political efforts at any length. They are said to have been highly approved by those in power: it is certain that they earned for their author the stigma of "pension'd scribbler." Both are now very rare; and in Murphy the former is represented by twenty-four numbers, the latter by two only. The *True Patriot* contains a dream of London abandoned to the rebels, which is admirably graphic; and there is also a prophetic chronicle of events for 1746, in which the same idea is treated in a lighter and more satirical vein. But perhaps the most interesting feature is the reappearance of Parson Adams, who addresses a couple of letters to the same periodical—one on the rising generally, and the other on the "young England" of the day, as exemplified in a very offensive specimen he had recently encountered at Mr. Wilson's. Other minor points of interest in connection with the *Jacobite's Journal*, are the tradition associating Hogarth with the rude woodcut headpiece (a Scotch man and woman on an ass led by a monk) which surmounted its earlier numbers, and the genial welcome given in No. 5, perhaps not without some touch of contrition, to the two first volumes, then just published, of Richardson's *Clarissa*. The pen is the pen of an imaginary "correspondent," but the words are unmistakably Fielding's:—

"When I tell you I have lately received this Pleasure [*i.e.* of reading a new master-piece], you will not want me to inform you that I owe it to the Author of CLARISSA. Such

Simplicity, such Manners, such deep Penetration into Nature; such Power to raise and alarm the Passions, few Writers, either ancient or modern, have been possessed of. My Affections are so strongly engaged, and my Fears are so raised, by what I have already read, that I cannot express my Eagerness to see the rest. Sure this Mr. *Richardson* is Master of all that Art which *Horace* compares to Witchcraft

—Pectus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet
Ut Magus.—"

Between the discontinuance of the *True Patriot* and the establishment of its successor occurred an event, the precise date of which has been hitherto unknown, namely, Fielding's second marriage. The account given of this by Lady Louisa Stuart is as follows:—

"His [Fielding's] biographers seem to have been shy of disclosing that after the death of this charming woman [his first wife] he married her maid. And yet the act was not so discreditable to his character as it may sound. The maid had few personal charms, but was an excellent creature, devotedly attached to her mistress, and almost broken-hearted for her loss. In the first agonies of his own grief, which approached to frenzy, he found no relief but from weeping along with her; nor solace, when a degree calmer, but in talking to her of the angel they mutually regretted. This made her his habitual confidential associate, and in process of time he began to think he could not give his children a tenderer mother, or secure for himself a more faithful housekeeper and nurse. At least this was what he told his friends; and it is certain that her conduct as his wife confirmed it, and fully justified his good opinion."

It has now been ascertained that the marriage took place at St. Bene't's, Paul's Wharf, an obscure little church in the City, at present surrendered to a Welsh congregation, but at that time, like Mary-le-bone old church, much

in request for unions of a private character. The date in the register is the 27th of November 1747. The second Mrs. Fielding's maiden name, which has been hitherto variously reported as Macdonnell, Macdonald, and Macdaniel, is given as Mary Daniel,[1] and she is further described as "of St. Clement's Danes, Middlesex, Spinster." Either previously to this occurrence, or immediately after it, Fielding seems to have taken two rooms in a house in Back Lane, Twickenham, "not far," says the Rev. Mr. Cobbett in his *Memorials*, "from the site of Copt Hall." In 1872 this house was still standing,—a quaint old-fashioned wooden structure;[2]—and from hence, on the 25th February 1748, was baptized the first of the novelist's sons concerning whom any definite information exists—the William Fielding who, like his father, became a Westminster magistrate. Beyond suggesting that it may supply a reason why, during Mrs. Fielding's life-time, her husband's earliest biographer made no reference to the marriage, it is needless to dwell upon the proximity between the foregoing dates. In other respects the circumstance now first made public is not inconsistent with Lady Stuart's narrative; and there is no doubt, from the references to her in the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* and elsewhere, that Mary Daniel did prove an excellent wife, mother, and nurse. Another thing is made clear by the date established, and this is that the verses "On Felix; Marry'd to a Cook-Maid" in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1746, to which Mr. Lawrence refers, cannot possibly have anything to do with Fielding,

[1] See note to Fielding's letter in Chap. vii.

[2] Now (1883) it no longer exists, and a row of cottages occupies the site.

although they seem to indicate that alliances of the kind were not unusual. Perhaps *Pamela* had made them fashionable. On the other hand, the supposed allusion to Lyttelton and Fielding, to be found in the first edition of *Peregrine Pickle*, but afterwards suppressed, receives a certain confirmation. "When," says Smollett, speaking of the relations of an imaginary Mr. Spondy with Gosling Scrag, who is understood to represent Lyttelton, "he is inclined to marry his own cook-wench, his gracious patron may condescend to give the bride away; and may finally settle him in his old age, as a trading Westminster justice." That, looking to the facts, Fielding's second marriage should have gained the approval and countenance of Lyttelton is no more than the upright and honourable character of the latter would lead us to expect.

The *Jacobite's Journal* ceased to appear in November 1748. In the early part of the December following, the remainder of Smollett's programme came to pass, and by Lyttelton's interest Fielding was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Westminster. From a letter in the *Bedford Correspondence*, dated 13th December 1748, respecting the lease of a house or houses which would qualify him to act for Middlesex, it would seem that the county was afterwards added to his commission. He must have entered upon his office in the first weeks of December, as upon the ninth of that month one John Salter was committed to the Gatehouse by Henry Fielding, Esq., "of Bow Street, Covent Garden, formerly Sir Thomas de Veil's." Sir Thomas de Veil, who died in 1746, and whose *Memoirs* had just been published, could not, however, have been Fielding's immediate predecessor.

CHAPTER V.

TOM JONES.

WRITING from Basingstoke to his brother Tom, on the 29th October 1746, Joseph Warton thus refers to a visit he paid to Fielding:—

"I wish you had been with me last week, when I spent two evenings with Fielding and his sister, who wrote David Simple, and you may guess I was very well entertained. The lady indeed retir'd pretty soon, but Russell and I sat up with the Poet [Warton no doubt uses the word here in the sense of 'maker' or 'creator'] till one or two in the morning, and were inexpressibly diverted. I find he values, as he justly may, his Joseph Andrews above all his writings: he was extremely civil to me, I fancy, on my Father's account."[1]

This mention of *Joseph Andrews* has misled some of Fielding's biographers into thinking that he ranked that novel above *Tom Jones*. But, in October 1746, *Tom Jones* had not been published; and, from the absence of any reference to it by Warton, it is only reasonable to conclude that it had not yet assumed a definite form, or Fielding, who was by no means uncommunicative, would in all probability have spoken of it

[1] *i.e.* the Rev. Thomas Warton, Vicar of Basingstoke, and sometime Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

as an effort from which he expected still greater things. It is clear, too, that at this date he was staying in London, presumably in lodgings with his sister; and it is also most likely that he lived much in town when he was conducting the *True Patriot* and the *Jacobite's Journal*. At other times he would appear to have had no settled place of abode. There are traditions that *Tom Jones* was composed in part at Salisbury, in a house at the foot of Milford Hill; and again that it was written at Twiverton, or Twerton-on-Avon, near Bath, where, as the Vicar pointed out in *Notes and Queries* for March 15th, 1879, there still exists a house called Fielding's Lodge, over the door of which is a stone crest of a phœnix rising out of a mural coronet. This latter tradition is supported by the statement of Mr. Richard Graves, author of the *Spiritual Quixote*, and rector, *circa* 1750, of the neighbouring parish of Claverton, who says in his *Trifling Anecdotes of the late Ralph Allen*, that Fielding while at Twerton used to dine almost daily with Allen at Prior Park. There are also traces of his residence at Bath itself; and of visits to the seat of Lyttelton's father at Hagley in Worcestershire. Towards the close of 1747 he had, as before stated, rooms in Back Lane, Twickenham; and it must be to this or to some earlier period that Walpole alludes in his *Parish Register* (1759):—

> "Here Fielding met his bunter Muse
> And, as they quaff'd the fiery juice,
> Droll Nature stamp'd each lucky hit
> With unimaginable wit;"—

a quatrain in which the last lines excuse the first. According to Mr. Cobbett's already-quoted *Memorials of Twickenham*, he left that place upon his appointment as a

Middlesex magistrate, when he moved to Bow Street. His house in Bow Street belonged to John, Duke of Bedford; and he continued to live in it until a short time before his death. It was subsequently occupied by his half-brother and successor, Sir John,[1] who, writing to the Duke in March 1770, to thank him for his munificent gift of an additional ten years to the lease, recalls "that princely instance of generosity which his Grace shewed to his late brother, Henry Fielding."

What this was, is not specified. It may have been the gift of the leases of those tenements which, as explained, were necessary to qualify Fielding to act as a Justice of the Peace for the county of Middlesex; it may even have been the lease of the Bow Street house; or it may have been simply a gift of money. But whatever it was, it was something considerable. In his appeal to the Duke, at the close of the last chapter, Fielding referred to previous obligations, and in his dedication of *Tom Jones* to Lyttelton, he returns again to his Grace's beneficence. Another person, of whose kindness grateful but indirect mention is made in the same dedication, is Ralph Allen, who, according to Derrick, the Bath M.C., sent the novelist a present of £200, before he had even made his acquaintance,[2] which, from the reference to Allen in *Joseph Andrews*, probably began before 1742. Lastly, there is Lyttelton himself, concerning whom, in addition to a sentence which implies that he actually suggested the writing of *Tom Jones*, we have

[1] In the riots of '80—as Dickens has not forgotten to note in *Barnaby Rudge*—the house was destroyed by the mob, who burned Sir John's goods in the street (Boswell's *Johnson*, chap. lxx.)

[2] Derrick's *Letters*, 1767, ii. 95.

the express statements on Fielding's part that "without your Assistance this History had never been completed," and "I partly owe to you my Existence during great Part of the Time which I have employed in composing it." These words must plainly be accepted as indicating pecuniary help; and, taking all things together, there can be little doubt that for some years antecedent to his appointment as a Justice of the Peace, Fielding was in straitened circumstances, and was largely aided, if not practically supported, by his friends. Even supposing him to have been subsidised by Government as alleged, his profits from the *True Patriot* and the *Jacobite's Journal* could not have been excessive; and his gout, of which he speaks in one of his letters to the Duke of Bedford, must have been a serious obstacle in the way of his legal labours.

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling, was published by Andrew Millar on the 28th of February 1749, and its appearance in six volumes, 12mo, was announced in the *General Advertizer* of that day's date. There had been no author's name on the title-page of *Joseph Andrews*; but *Tom Jones* was duly described as "by Henry Fielding, Esq.," and bore the motto from Horace, seldom so justly applied, of "*Mores hominum multorum vidit.*" The advertisement also ingenuously stated that as it was "impossible to get Sets bound fast enough to answer the Demand for them, such Gentlemen and Ladies as pleased, might have them sew'd in Blue Paper and Boards at the Price of 16s. a Set." The date of issue sufficiently disposes of the statement of Cunningham and others, that the book was written at Bow Street. Little more than the dedication, which is preface as well, can have been pro-

duced by Fielding in his new home. Making fair allowance for the usual tardy progress of a book through the press, and taking into consideration the fact that the author was actively occupied with his yet unfamiliar magisterial duties, it is most probable that the last chapter of *Tom Jones* had been penned before the end of 1748, and that after that time it had been at the printer's. For the exact price paid to the author by the publisher on this occasion we are indebted to Horace Walpole, who, writing to George Montagu in May 1749, says—"Millar the bookseller has done very generously by him [Fielding]: finding Tom Jones, for which he had given him six hundred pounds, sell so greatly, he has since given him another hundred."

It is time, however, to turn from these particulars to the book itself. In *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding's work had been mainly experimental. He had set out with an intention which had unexpectedly developed into something else. That something else, he had explained, was the comic epic in prose. He had discovered its scope and possibilities only when it was too late to re-cast his original design; and though *Joseph Andrews* has all the freshness and energy of a first attempt in a new direction, it has also the manifest disadvantages of a mixed conception and an uncertain plan. No one had perceived these defects more plainly than the author; and in *Tom Jones* he set himself diligently to perfect his new-found method. He believed that he foresaw a "new Province of Writing," of which he regarded himself with justice as the founder and lawgiver; and in the "prolegomenous, or introductory Chapters" to each book —those delightful resting-spaces where, as George Eliot

says, "he seems to bring his arm-chair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English" —he takes us, as it were, into his confidence, and discourses frankly of his aims and his way of work. He looked upon these little "initial Essays" indeed, as an indispensable part of his scheme. They have given him, says he more than once, "the greatest Pains in composing" of any part of his book, and he hopes that, like the Greek and Latin mottoes in the *Spectator*, they may serve to secure him against imitation by inferior authors.[1] Naturally a great deal they contain is by this time commonplace, although it was unhackneyed enough when Fielding wrote. The absolute necessity in work of this kind for genius, learning, and knowledge of the world, the constant obligation to preserve character and probability—to regard variety and the law of contrast:—these are things with which the modern tiro (however much he may fail to possess or observe them) is now supposed to be at least theoretically acquainted. But there are other chapters in which Fielding may also be said to reveal his personal point of view, and these can scarcely be disregarded. His "Fare," he says, following the language of the table, is "HUMAN NATURE," which he shall first present "in that more plain and simple Manner in which it is found in the Country," and afterwards "hash and ragoo it with all the high *French* and *Italian* seasoning of Affectation and Vice which Courts and Cities afford." His inclination,

[1] Notwithstanding this warning, Cumberland (who copied so much) copied these in his novel of *Henry*. On the other hand, Fielding's French and Polish translators omitted them as superfluous.

he admits, is rather to the middle and lower classes than to "the highest Life," which he considers to present "very little Humour or Entertainment." His characters (as before) are based upon actual experience; or, as he terms it, "Conversation." He does not propose to present his reader with "Models of Perfection;" he has never happened to meet with those "faultless Monsters." He holds that mankind is constitutionally defective, and that a single bad act does not, of necessity, imply a bad nature. He has also observed, without surprise, that virtue in this world is not always "the certain Road to Happiness," nor "Vice to Misery." In short, having been admitted "behind the Scenes of this Great Theatre of Nature," he paints humanity as he has found it, extenuating nothing, nor setting down aught in malice, but reserving the full force of his satire and irony for affectation and hypocrisy. His sincere endeavour, he says moreover in his dedication to Lyttelton, has been "to recommend Goodness and Innocence," and promote the cause of religion and virtue. And he has all the consciousness that what he is engaged upon is no ordinary enterprise. He is certain that his pages will outlive both "their own infirm Author" and his enemies; and he appeals to Fame to solace and reassure him—

"Come, bright Love of Fame,"—says the beautiful "Invocation" which begins the thirteenth Book,—"inspire my glowing Breast: Not thee I call, who over swelling Tides of Blood and Tears, dost bear the Heroe on to Glory, while Sighs of Millions waft his spreading Sails; but thee, fair, gentle Maid, whom *Mnesis*, happy Nymph, first on the Banks of *Hebrus* didst produce. Thee, whom *Maeonia* educated, whom *Mantua* charm'd, and who, on that fair Hill which overlooks the proud Metropolis of *Britain*, sat, with thy *Milton*, sweetly

tuning the Heroic Lyre; fill my ravished Fancy with the Hopes of charming Ages yet to come. Foretel me that some tender Maid, whose Grandmother is yet unborn, hereafter, when, under the fictitious Name of *Sophia*, she reads the real Worth which once existed in my *Charlotte*, shall, from her sympathetic Breast, send forth the heaving Sigh. Do thou teach me not only to foresee, but to enjoy, nay, even to feed on future Praise. Comfort me by a solemn Assurance, that when the little Parlour in which I sit at this Instant, shall be reduced to a worse furnished Box, I shall be read, with Honour, by those who never knew nor saw me, and whom I shall neither know nor see."

With no less earnestness, after a mock apostrophe to Wealth, he appeals to Genius:—

"Teach me (he exclaims), which to thee is no difficult Task, to know Mankind better than they know themselves. Remove that Mist which dims the Intellects of Mortals, and causes them to adore Men for their Art, or to detest them for their Cunning in deceiving others, when they are, in Reality, the Objects only of Ridicule, for deceiving themselves. Strip off the thin Disguise of Wisdom from Self-Conceit, of Plenty from Avarice, and of Glory from Ambition. Come thou, that hast inspired thy *Aristophanes*, thy *Lucian*, thy *Cervantes*, thy *Rabelais*, thy *Molière*, thy *Shakespear*, thy *Swift*, thy *Marivaux*, fill my Pages with Humour, 'till Mankind learn the Good-Nature to laugh only at the Follies of others, and the Humility to grieve at their own."

From the little group of immortals who are here enumerated, it may be gathered with whom Fielding sought to compete, and with whom he hoped hereafter to be associated. His hopes were not in vain. Indeed, in one respect, he must be held to have even outrivalled that particular predecessor with whom he has been oftenest compared. Like *Don Quixote*, *Tom Jones* is the precursor of a new order of things,—the earliest and freshest expression of a new departure in art. But

while *Tom Jones* is, to the full, as amusing as *Don Quixote*, it has the advantage of a greatly superior plan, and an interest more skilfully sustained. The incidents which, in Cervantes, simply succeed each other like the scenes in a panorama, are, in *Tom Jones*, but parts of an organised and carefully-arranged progression towards a foreseen conclusion. As the hero and heroine cross and re-cross each other's track, there is scarcely an episode which does not aid in the moving forward of the story. Little details rise lightly and naturally to the surface of the narrative, not more noticeable at first than the most everyday occurrences, and a few pages farther on become of the greatest importance. The hero makes a mock proposal of marriage to Lady Bellaston. It scarcely detains attention, so natural an expedient does it appear, and behold in a chapter or two it has become a terrible weapon in the hands of the injured Sophia! Again, when the secret of Jones' birth[1] is finally disclosed, we look back and discover a hundred little premonitions which escaped us at first, but which, read by the light of our latest knowledge, assume a fresh significance. At the same time, it must be admitted that the over-quoted and somewhat antiquated dictum of Coleridge, by which *Tom Jones* is grouped with the *Alchemist* and *Œdipus Tyrannus*, as one of the three most perfect plots in the world, requires revision. It is impossible to apply the term "perfect"

[1] Much ink has been shed respecting Fielding's reason for making his hero illegitimate. But may not "The History of Tom Jones, a *Foundling*," have had no subtler origin than the recent establishment of the Foundling Hospital, of which Fielding had written in the *Champion*, and in which his friend Hogarth was interested?

to a work which contains such an inexplicable stumbling-block as the Man of the Hill's story. Then again, progress and animation alone will not make a perfect plot, unless probability be superadded. And although it cannot be said that Fielding disregards probability, he certainly strains it considerably. Money is conveniently lost and found; the naïvest coincidences continually occur; people turn up in the nick of time at the exact spot required, and develop the most needful (but entirely casual) relations with the characters. Sometimes an episode is so inartistically introduced as to be almost clumsy. Towards the end of the book, for instance, it has to be shown that Jones has still some power of resisting temptation, and he accordingly receives from a Mrs. Arabella Hunt, a written offer of her hand, which he declines. Mrs. Hunt's name has never been mentioned before, nor, after this occurrence, is it mentioned again. But in the brief fortnight which Jones has been in town, with his head full of Lady Bellaston, Sophia, and the rest, we are to assume that he has unwittingly inspired her with so desperate a passion that she proposes and is refused—all in a chapter. Imperfections of this kind are more worthy of consideration than some of the minor negligences which criticism has amused itself by detecting in this famous book. Such, among others, is the discovery made by a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, that in one place winter and summer come too close together; or the "strange specimen of oscitancy" which another (it is, in fact, Mr. Keightley) considers it worth while to record respecting the misplacing of the village of Hambrook. To such trifles as these last the precept of *non offendar maculis* may safely be applied,

although Fielding, wiser than his critics, seems to have foreseen the necessity for still larger allowances:—

"Cruel indeed," says he in his proemium to Book XI., "would it be, if such a Work as this History, which hath employed some Thousands of Hours in the composing, should be liable to be condemned, because some particular Chapter, or perhaps Chapters, may be obnoxious to very just and sensible Objections. . . . To write within such severe Rules as these, is as impossible as to live up to some splenetic Opinions; and if we judge according to the Sentiments of some Critics, and of some Christians, no Author will be saved in this World, and no Man in the next."

Notwithstanding its admitted superiority to *Joseph Andrews* as a work of art, there is no male character in *Tom Jones* which can compete with Parson Adams—none certainly which we regard with equal admiration. Allworthy, excellent compound of Lyttelton and Allen though he be, remains always a little stiff and cold in comparison with the "veined humanity" around him. We feel of him, as of another impeccable personage, that we "cannot breathe in that fine air, That pure severity of perfect light," and that we want the "warmth and colour" which we find in Adams. Allworthy is a type rather than a character—a fault which also seems to apply to that Molièresque hypocrite, the younger Blifil. Fielding seems to have welded this latter together, rather than to have fused him entire, and the result is a certain lack of verisimilitude, which makes us wonder how his pinchbeck professions and vamped-up virtues could deceive so many persons. On the other hand, his father, Captain John Blifil, has all the look of life. Nor can there be any doubt about the vitality of Squire Western. Whether the

germ of his character be derived from Addison's Tory Foxhunter or not, it is certain that Fielding must have had superabundant material of his own from which to model this thoroughly representative, and at the same time, completely individual character. Western has all the rustic tastes, the narrow prejudices, the imperfect education, the unreasoning hatred to the court, which distinguished the Jacobite country gentleman of the Georgian era; but his divided love for his daughter and his horses, his good-humour and his shrewdness, his foaming impulses and his quick subsidings, his tears, his oaths, and his barbaric dialect, are all essential features in a personal portrait. When Jones has rescued Sophia, he will give him all his stable, the Chevalier and Miss Slouch excepted; when he finds he is in love with her, he is in a frenzy to "get *at un*" and "spoil his Caterwauling." He will have the surgeon's heart's blood if he takes a drop too much from Sophia's white arm; when she opposes his wishes as to Blifil, he will turn her into the street with no more than a smock, and give his estate to the "*zinking* Fund." Throughout the book he is *qualis ab incepto*,—boisterous, brutal, jovial, and inimitable; so that when finally in "Chapter the Last," we get that pretty picture of him in Sophy's nursery, protesting that the tattling of his little granddaughter is "sweeter Music than the finest Cry of Dogs in *England*," we part with him almost with a feeling of esteem. Scott seems to have thought it unreasonable that he should have "taken a beating so unresistingly from the friend of Lord Fellamar," and even hints that the passage is an interpolation, although he wisely refrains from suggesting by whom, and should have known that

it was in the first edition. With all deference to so eminent an authority, it is impossible to share his hesitation. Fielding was fully aware that even the bravest have their fits of panic. It must besides be remembered that Lord Fellamar's friend was not an effeminate dandy, but a military man—probably a professed *sabreur*, if not a salaried bully like Captain Stab in the *Rake's Progress;* that he was armed with a stick and Western was not; and that he fell upon him in the most unexpected manner, in a place where he was wholly out of his element. It is inconceivable that the sturdy squire, with his faculty for distributing "Flicks" and "Dowses,"—who came so valiantly to the aid of Jones in his battle-royal with Blifil and Thwackum,—was likely, under any but very exceptional circumstances, to be dismayed by a cane. It was the exceptional character of the assault which made a coward of him; and Fielding, who had the keenest eye for inconsistencies of the kind, knew perfectly well what he was doing.

Of the remaining *dramatis personæ*—the swarming individualities with which the great comic epic is literally "all alive," as Lord Monboddo said—it is impossible to give any adequate account. Few of them, if any, are open to the objection already pointed out with respect to Allworthy and the younger Blifil, and most of them bear signs of having been closely copied from living models. Parson Thwackum, with his Antinomian doctrines, his bigotry, and his pedagogic notions of justice; Square the philosopher, with his faith in human virtue (alas! poor Square), and his cuckoo-cry about "the unalterable Rule of Right and the eternal Fitness of Things;" Par-

tridge—the unapproachable Partridge,—with his superstition, his vanity, and his perpetual *Infandum regina*, but who, notwithstanding all his cheap Latinity, cannot construe an unexpected phrase of Horace; Ensign Northerton, with his vague and disrespectful recollections of "Homo;" young Nightingale and Parson Supple:—each is a definite character bearing upon his forehead the mark of his absolute fidelity to human nature. Nor are the female actors less accurately conceived. Starched Miss Bridget Allworthy, with her pinched Hogarthian face; Miss Western, with her disjointed diplomatic jargon; that budding Slipslop, Mrs. Honour; worthy Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, Mrs. Waters, Lady Bellaston,—all are to the full as real. Lady Bellaston especially, deserves more than a word. Like Lady Booby in *Joseph Andrews*, she is not a pleasant character; but the picture of the fashionable demirep, cynical, sensual, and imperious, has never been drawn more vigorously, or more completely—even by Balzac. Lastly, there is the adorable Sophia herself, whose pardon should be asked for naming her in such close proximity to her frailer sister. Byron calls her (perhaps with a slight suspicion of exigence of rhyme) too "emphatic;" meaning, apparently, to refer to such passages as her conversation with Mrs. Fitzpatrick, etc. But the heroine of Fielding's time—a time which made merry over a lady's misadventures in horsemanship, and subjected her to such atrocities as those of Lord Fellamar—required to be strongly moulded; and Sophia Western is pure and womanly, in spite of her unfavourable surroundings. She is a charming example—the first of her race—of an unsentimentalised flesh-and-blood heroine; and Time

has bated no jot of her frank vitality or her healthy beauty. Her descendants in the modern novel are far more numerous than the family which she bore to the fortunate—the too fortunate—Mr. Jones.

And this reminds us that in the foregoing enumeration we have left out Hamlet. In truth, it is by no means easy to speak of this handsome, but very unheroic hero. Lady Mary, employing, curiously enough, the very phrase which Fielding has made one of his characters apply to Jones, goes so far as to call him a "sorry scoundrel;" and eminent critics have dilated upon his fondness for drink and play. But it is a notable instance of the way in which preconceived attributes are gradually attached to certain characters, that there is in reality little or nothing to show that he was either sot or gamester. With one exception, when, in the joy of his heart at his benefactor's recovery, he takes too much wine (and it may be noted that on the same occasion the Catonic Thwackum drinks considerably more), there is no evidence that he was specially given to tippling, even in an age of hard drinkers, while of his gambling there is absolutely no trace at all. On the other hand, he is admittedly brave, generous, chivalrous, kind to the poor, and courteous to women. What, then, is his cardinal defect? The answer lies in the fact that Fielding, following the doctrine laid down in his initial chapters, has depicted him under certain conditions (in which, it is material to note, he is always rather the tempted than the tempter), with an unvarnished truthfulness which to the pure-minded is repugnant, and to the prurient indecent. Remembering that he too had been young, and reproducing, it may be, his own experiences,

he exhibits his youth as he had found him—a "piebald miscellany,"—

"Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire;"

and, to our modern ideas, when no one dares, as Thackeray complained, "to depict to his utmost power a Man," the spectacle is discomforting. Yet those who look upon human nature as keenly and unflinchingly as Fielding did, knowing how weak and fallible it is,—how prone to fall away by accident or passion,—can scarcely deny the truth of Tom Jones. That such a person cannot properly serve as a hero now is rather a question of our time than of Fielding's, and it may safely be set aside. One objection which has been made, and made with reason, is that Fielding, while taking care that Nemesis shall follow his hero's lapses, has spoken of them with too much indulgence, or rather without sufficient excuse. Coleridge, who was certainly not squeamish, seems to have felt this when, in a MS. note[1] in the well-known British Museum edition, he says:—

"Even in this most questionable part of Tom Jones [*i.e.* the Lady Bellaston episode, chap. ix. Book xv.], I cannot but think after frequent reflection on it, that an additional paragraph, more fully & forcibly unfolding Tom Jones's sense of self-degradation on the discovery of the true character of the relation, in which he had stood to Lady Bellaston—& his awakened feeling of the dignity and manliness of Chastity—would have removed in great measure any just objection, at all events relating to Fielding himself, by taking in the state of manners in his time."

[1] These notes were communicated by Mr. James Gillman to *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, published by H. N. Coleridge in 1836. The book in which they were made, (it is the four volume edition of 1773, and has Gillman's book-plate), is now in the British Museum. The above transcript is from the MS.

Another point suggested by these last lines may be touched *en passant*. Lady Bellaston, as Fielding has carefully explained (chap. i. Book xiv.), was not a typical, but an exceptional, member of society; and although there were eighteenth-century precedents for such alliances (*e.g.* Miss Edwards and Lord Anne Hamilton, Mrs. Upton and General Braddock,) it is a question whether in a picture of average English life it was necessary to deal with exceptions of this kind, or, at all events, to exemplify them in the principal personage. But the discussion of this subject would prove endless. Right or wrong, Fielding has certainly suffered in popularity for his candour in this respect, since one of the wisest and wittiest books ever written cannot, without hesitation, be now placed in the hands of women or very young people. Moreover, this same candour has undoubtedly attracted to its pages many, neither young nor women, whom its wit finds unintelligent, and its wisdom leaves unconcerned.

But what a brave wit it is, what a wisdom after all, that is contained in this wonderful novel! Where shall we find its like for richness of reflection—for inexhaustible good-humour—for large and liberal humanity! Like Fontenelle, Fielding might fairly claim that he had never cast the smallest ridicule upon the most infinitesimal of virtues; it is against hypocrisy, affectation, insincerity of all kinds, that he wages war. And what a keen and searching observation,—what a perpetual faculty of surprise,—what an endless variety of method! Take the chapter headed ironically *A Receipt to regain the lost Affections of a Wife*, in which Captain John Blifil gives so striking an example of Mr. Samuel Johnson's just pub-

lished *Vanity of Human Wishes*, by dying suddenly of apoplexy while he is considering what he will do with Mr. Allworthy's property (when it reverts to him); or that admirable scene, commended by Macaulay, of Partridge at the Playhouse, which is none the worse because it has just a slight look of kinship with that other famous visit which Sir Roger de Coverley paid to Philips's *Distrest Mother*. Or take again, as utterly unlike either of these, that burlesque Homeric battle in the churchyard, where the "sweetly-winding Stour" stands for "reedy Simois," and the bumpkins round for Greeks and Trojans! Or take yet once more, though it is woful work to offer bricks from this edifice which *has* already (in a sense) outlived the Escorial,[1] the still more diverse passage which depicts the changing conflict in Black George's mind as to whether he shall return to Jones the sixteen guineas that he has found:—

"*Black George* having received the Purse, set forward towards the Alehouse; but in the Way a Thought occurred whether he should not detain this Money likewise. His Conscience, however, immediately started at this Suggestion, and began to upbraid him with Ingratitude to his Benefactor. To this his Avarice answered, 'That his conscience should have considered that Matter before, when he deprived poor *Jones* of his 500l. That having quietly acquiesced in what was of so much greater Importance, it was absurd, if not downright Hypocrisy, to affect any Qualms at this Trifle.'—In return to which, Conscience, like a good Lawyer, attempted to distinguish between an absolute Breach of Trust, as here where the Goods were delivered, and a bare Concealment of what was found, as in the former Case. Avarice presently treated this with Ridicule, called it a Distinction without a Difference, and absolutely insisted, that when once all Pre-

[1] The Escorial, it will be remembered, was partially burned in 1872.

tensions of Honour and Virtue were given up in any one Instance, that there was no Precedent for resorting to them upon a second Occasion. In short, poor Conscience had certainly been defeated in the Argument, had not Fear stept in to her Assistance, and very strenuously urged, that the real Distinction between the two Actions, did not lie in the different degrees of Honour, but of Safety: For that the secreting the 500l. was a Matter of very little Hazard; whereas the detaining the sixteen Guineas was liable to the utmost Danger of Discovery.

"By this friendly Aid of Fear, Conscience obtained a compleat Victory in the Mind of *Black George*, and after making him a few Compliments on his Honesty, forced him to deliver the Money to *Jones*."

When one remembers that this is but one of many such passages, and that the book, notwithstanding the indulgence claimed by the author in the Preface, and despite a certain hurry at the close, is singularly even in its workmanship, it certainly increases our respect for the manly genius of the writer, who, amid all the distractions of ill-health and poverty, could find the courage to pursue and perfect such a conception. It is true that both Cervantes and Bunyan wrote their immortal works in the confinement of a prison. But they must at least have enjoyed the seclusion so needful to literary labour; while *Tom Jones* was written here and there, at all times and in all places, with the dun at the door and the wolf not very far from the gate.[1]

The little sentence quoted some pages back from Walpole's letters is sufficient proof, if proof were needed, of its immediate success. Andrew Millar was shrewd

[1] Salisbury, in the neighbourhood of which *Tom Jones* is laid, claims the originals of some of the characters. Thwackum is said to have been Hele, a schoolmaster; Square, one Chubb, a Deist; and Dowling the lawyer a person named Stillingfleet.

enough, despite his constitutional confusion, and he is not likely to have given an additional £100 to the author of any book without good reason. But the indications of that success are not very plainly impressed upon the public prints. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1749, which, as might be expected from Johnson's connection with it, contains ample accounts of his own tragedy of *Irene* and Richardson's recently-published *Clarissa*, has no notice of *Tom Jones*, nor is there even any advertisement of the second edition issued in the same year. But, in the emblematic frontispiece, it appears under *Clarissa* (and sharing with that work a possibly unintended proximity to a sprig of laurel stuck in a bottle of Nantes), among a pile of the books of the year; and in the "poetical essays" for August, one Thomas Cawthorn breaks into rhymed panegyric. "Sick of her fools," sings this enthusiastic but scarcely lucid admirer—

> "Sick of her fools, great *Nature* broke the jest,
> And *Truth* held out each character to test,
> When *Genius* spoke: Let *Fielding* take the pen!
> Life dropt her mask, and all mankind were men."

There were others, however, who would scarcely have echoed the laudatory sentiments of Mr. Cawthorn. Among these was again the excellent Richardson, who seems to have been wholly unpropitiated by the olive branch held out to him in the *Jacobite's Journal*. His vexation at the indignity put upon *Pamela* by *Joseph Andrews* was now complicated by a twittering jealousy of the "spurious brat," as he obligingly called *Tom Jones*, whose success had been so "unaccountable." In these circumstances, some of the letters of his correspondents

must have been gall and wormwood to him. Lady Bradshaigh, for instance, under her *nom de plume* of "Belfour," tells him that she is fatigued with the very name of the book, having met several young ladies who were for ever talking of their Tom Jones's, "for so they call their favourites," and that the gentlemen, on their side, had their Sophias, one having gone so far as to give that all-popular name to his "Dutch mastiff puppy." But perhaps the best and freshest exhibition (for, as far as can be ascertained, it has never hitherto been made public) of Richardson's attitude to his rival is to be found in a little group of letters in the Forster collection at South Kensington. The writers are Aaron Hill and his daughters; but the letters do not seem to have been known to Mrs. Barbauld, whose last communication from Hill is dated November 2, 1748. Nor are they to be found in Hill's own Correspondence. The ladies, it appears, had visited Richardson at Salisbury Court in 1741, and were great admirers of *Pamela*, and the "divine *Clarissa*." Some months after *Tom Jones* was published, Richardson (not yet having brought himself to read the book) had asked them to do so, and give him their opinion as to its merits. Thereupon Minerva and Astræa, who despite their names, and their description of themselves as "Girls of an untittering Disposition," must have been very bright and lively young persons, began seriously "to lay their two wise heads together" and "hazard this Discovery of their Emptiness." Having "with much ado got over some Reluctance, that was bred by a familiar coarseness in the *Title*," they report "much (masqu'd) merit" in the "whole six volumes"—"a double merit, both of Head, and *Heart*."

Had it been the latter only it would be more worthy of Mr. Richardson's perusal; but, say these considerate pioneers, if he does spare it his attention, he must only do so at his leisure, for the author "introduces All his Sections (and too often interweaves the *serious* Body of his meanings), with long Runs of bantering Levity, which his [Fielding's] Good sense may suffer by Effect of." "It is true (they continue), he seems to wear this Lightness, as a grave Head sometime wears a *Feather:* which tho' He and Fashion may consider as an ornament, Reflection will condemn, as a Disguise, and *covering.*" Then follows a brief excursus, intended for their correspondent's special consolation, upon the folly of treating grave things lightly; and with delightful sententiousness the letter thus concludes:—

"Mean while, it is an honest pleasure, which we take in adding, that (exclusive of one wild, detach'd, and independent Story of a *Man of the Hill*, that neither brings on Anything, nor rose from Anything that went before it) All the changefull windings of the Author's Fancy carry on a course of regular Design; and end in an extremely moving Close, where Lives that seem'd to wander and run different ways, meet, All, in an instructive Center.

"The whole Piece consists of an inventive Race of Disapointments and Recoveries. It excites Curiosity, and holds it watchful. It has just and pointed Satire; but it is a partial Satire, and confin'd, too narrowly: It sacrifices to Authority, and Interest. Its *Events* reward Sincerity, and punish and expose Hypocrisy; shew Pity and Benevolence in amiable Lights, and Avarice and Brutality in very despicable ones. In every Part It has Humanity for its Intention: In too many, it *seems* wantoner than It was meant to be: It has bold shocking Pictures; and (I fear)[1] not unresembling ones, in high Life, and in low. And (to conclude this too adven-

[1] The "pen-holder" is the fair Astræa.

turous Guess-work, from a Pair of forward Baggages) woud, every where, (we think,) *deserve* to please,—if stript of what the Author thought himself most sure to *please by*.

"And thus, Sir, we have told you our sincere opinion of *Tom Jones*. . . .

"Your most profest Admirers and most humble Servants,

"Astræa and Minerva } Hill.

"PLAISTOW *the* 27*th of July* 1749."

Richardson's reply to this ingenuous criticism is dated the 4th of August. His requesting two young women to study and criticise a book which he has heard strongly condemned as immoral,—his own obvious familiarity with what he has not read but does not scruple to censure,—his transparently jealous anticipation of its author's ability,—all this forms a picture so characteristic alike of the man and the time that no apology is needed for the following textual extract:—

"I must confess, that I have been prejudiced by the Opinion of Several judicious Friends against the truly coarse-titled Tom Jones; and so have been discouraged from reading it.—I was told, that it was a rambling Collection of Waking Dreams, in which Probability was not observed: And that it had a very bad Tendency. And I had Reason to think that the Author intended for his Second View (His *first*, to fill his Pocket, by accommodating it to the reigning Taste) in writing it, to whiten a vicious Character, and to make Morality bend to his Practices. What Reason had he to make his Tom illegitimate, in an Age where Keeping is become a Fashion? Why did he make him a common—What shall I call it? And a Kept Fellow, the Lowest of all Fellows, yet in Love with a Young Creature who was traping [trapesing?] after him, a Fugitive from her Father's House?—Why did he draw his Heroine so fond, so foolish, and so insipid?—Indeed he has one Excuse —He knows not how to draw a delicate Woman—He has

not been accustomed to such Company,—And is too prescribing, too impetuous, too immoral, I will venture to say, to take any other Byass than that a perverse and crooked Nature has given him ; or Evil Habits, at least, have confirm'd in him. Do Men expect Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles ? But, perhaps, I think the worse of the Piece because I know the Writer, and dislike his Principles both Public and Private, tho' I wish well to the *Man*, and Love Four worthy Sisters of his, with whom I am well acquainted. And indeed should admire him, did he make the Use of his Talents which I wish him to make, For the Vein of Humour, and Ridicule, which he is Master of, might, if properly turned do great Service to y^e^ Cause of Virtue.

"But no more of this Gentleman's Work, after I have said, That the favourable Things, you say of the Piece, will tempt me, if I can find Leisure, to give it a Perusal."

Notwithstanding this last sentence, Richardson more than once reverts to *Tom Jones* before he finishes his letter. Its effect upon Minerva and Astræa is best described in an extract from Aaron Hill's reply, dated seven days later (August the 11th) :—

"Unfortunate *Tom Jones!* how sadly has he mortify'd Two sawcy Correspondents of your making ! They are with me now : and bid me tell you, You have spoil'd 'em Both, for Criticks.—Shall I add, a Secret which they did not bid me tell you ?—They, Both, fairly *cry'd*, that You shou'd think it possible they cou'd approve of Any thing, in Any work, that had an *Evil Tendency*, in any Part or Purpose of it. They maintain their Point so far, however, as to be convinc'd they say, that *you* will disapprove this over-rigid Judgment of those Friends, who cou'd not find a Thread of Moral Meaning in Tom Jones, quite independent of the Levities they justly censure.—And, as soon as you have Time to read him, for yourself, tis there, pert Sluts, they will be bold enough to rest the Matter.—Mean while, they love and honour you and your opinions."

To this the author of *Clarissa* replied by writing a long epistle deploring the pain he had given the "dear Ladies," and minutely justifying his foregone conclusions from the expressions they had used. He refers to Fielding again as "a very indelicate, a very impetuous, an unyielding-spirited Man;" and he also trusts to be able to "bestow a Reading" on *Tom Jones;* but by a letter from Lady Bradshaigh, printed in Barbauld, and dated December 1749, it seems that even at that date he had not, or pretended he had not, yet done so. In another of the unpublished South Kensington letters, from a Mr. Solomon Lowe, occurs the following:—"I do not doubt" —says the writer—"but all Europe will ring of it [*Clarissa*]: when a Cracker, that was some thous[d] hours a-composing,[1] will no longer be heard, or talkt-of." Richardson, with business-like precision, has gravely docketed this in his own handwriting,—"Cracker, T. Jones."

It is unfortunate for Mr. Lowe's reputation as a prophet that, after more than one hundred and thirty years, this ephemeral firework, as he deemed it, should still be sparkling with undiminished brilliancy, and to judge by recent editions, is selling as vigorously as ever. From the days when Lady Mary wrote "*Ne plus ultra*" in her own copy, and La Harpe called it *le premier roman du monde*, (a phrase which, by the way, De Musset applies to *Clarissa*), it has come down to us with an almost universal accompaniment of praise. Gibbon, Byron, Coleridge, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray,—have all left their admiration on record,—to say nothing of professional critics innumerable. As may be seen from the British Museum Catalogue, it has been translated into French,

[1] *Vide Tom Jones*, Book xi. chap. i.

German, Polish, Dutch, and Spanish. Russia and Sweden have also their versions. The first French translation, or rather abridgment, by M. de La Place was prohibited in France (to Richardson's delight) by royal decree, an act which affords another instance, in Scott's words, of that "French delicacy, which, on so many occasions, has strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel" (*e.g.* the novels of M. Crébillon *fils*). La Place's edition (1750) was gracefully illustrated with sixteen plates by Hubert Bourguignon, called Gravelot, one of those eighteenth-century illustrators whose designs at present are the rage in Paris. In England, Fielding's best-known pictorial interpreters are Rowlandson and Cruikshank, the latter being by far the more sympathetic. Stothard also prepared some designs for Harrison's *Novelist's Magazine*; but his refined and effeminate pencil was scarcely strong enough for the task. Hogarth alone could have been the ideal illustrator of Henry Fielding; that is to say—if, in lieu of the rude designs he made for *Tristram Shandy*, he could have been induced to undertake the work in the larger fashion of the *Rake's Progress*, or *The Marriage à la Mode*.

As might perhaps be anticipated, *Tom Jones* attracted the dramatist.[1] In 1765, one J. H. Steffens made a comedy of it for the German boards; and in 1785, a M. Desforges based upon it another, called *Tom*

[1] It may be added that it also attracted the plagiarist. As *Pamela* had its sequel in *Pamela's Conduct in High Life*, 1741, so *Tom Jones* was continued in *The History of Tom Jones the Foundling, in his Married State*, a second edition of which was issued in 1750. The Preface announces, needlessly enough, that "Henry Fielding, Esq., is not the Author of this Book." It deserves no serious consideration.

Jones à Londres, which was acted at the *Théâtre Français*. It was also turned into a comic opera by Joseph Reed in 1769, and played at Covent Garden. But its most piquant transformation is the *Comédie lyrique* of Poinsinet, acted at Paris in 1765-6 to the lively music of Philidor. The famous Caillot took the part of Squire Western, who, surrounded by *piqueurs*, and girt with the conventional *cor de chasse* of the Gallic sportsman, sings the following *ariette*, diversified with true Fontainebleau terms of venery :—

" D'un Cerf, dix Cors, j'ai connaissance :
On l'attaque au fort, on le lance ;
Tous sont prêts :
Piqueurs & Valets
Suivent les pas de l'ami Jone (*sic*).
J'entends crier : Volcelets, Volcelets.
Aussitôt j'ordonne
Que la Meute donne.
Tayaut, Tayaut, Tayaut.
Mes chiens découplés l'environnent ;
Les trompes sonnent :
'Courage, Amis : Tayaut, Tayaut.'
Quelques chiens, que l'ardeur dérange,
Quittent la voye & prennent le change
Jones les rassure d'un cri :
Ourvari, ourvari.
Accoute, accoute, accoute.
Au retour nous en revoyons.
Accoute, à Mirmiraut, courons
Tout à Griffaut ;
Y après : Tayaut, Tayaut.
On reprend route,
Voilà le Cerf à l'eau.
La trompe sonne,
La Meute donne,
L'écho résonne,

Nous pressons les nouveaux relais :
Volcelets, Volcelets.
L'animal forcé succombe,
Fait un effort, se releve, enfin tombe :
Et nos chasseurs chantent tous à l'envi :
' Amis, goûtons les fruits de la victoire ;
' Amis, Amis, célébrons notre gloire.
' Halali, Fanfare, Halali
' Halali.' "

With this triumphant flourish of trumpets the present chapter may be fittingly concluded.[1]

[1] See Appendix No. II. : Fielding and Mrs. Hussey.

CHAPTER VI.

JUSTICE LIFE—AMELIA.

In one of Horace Walpole's letters to George Montagu, already quoted, there is a description of Fielding's Bow Street establishment, which has attracted more attention than it deserves. The letter is dated May the 18th, 1749, and the passage (in Cunningham's edition) runs as follows:—

"He [Rigby] and Peter Bathurst[1] t'other night carried a servant of the latter's, who had attempted to shoot him, before Fielding; who, to all his other vocations, has, by the grace of Mr. Lyttelton, added that of Middlesex justice. He sent them word he was at supper, that they must come next morning. They did not understand that freedom, and ran up, where they found him banqueting with a blind man, a whore, and three Irishmen, on some cold mutton and a bone of ham, both in one dish, and the dirtiest cloth. He never stirred nor asked them to sit. Rigby, who had seen him so often come to beg a guinea of Sir C. Williams, and Bathurst, at whose father's he had lived for victuals, understood that dig-

[1] Probably a son of Peter Bathurst (d. 1748), brother of Pope's friend, Allen, Lord Bathurst. Rigby was the Richard Rigby whose despicable character is familiar in Eighteenth-Century Memoirs. "He died (says Cunningham) involved in debt, with his accounts as Paymaster of the Forces hopelessly unsettled."

nity as little, and pulled themselves chairs; on which he civilised."

Scott calls this "a humiliating anecdote;" and both Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Keightley have exhausted rhetoric in the effort to explain it away. As told, it is certainly uncomplimentary; but considerable deductions must be made, both for the attitude of the narrator and the occasion of the narrative. Walpole's championship of his friends was notorious; and his absolute injustice, when his partisan spirit was uppermost, is everywhere patent to the readers of his Letters. In the present case he was not of the encroaching party; and he speaks from hearsay solely. But his friends had, in his opinion, been outraged by a man, who, according to his ideas of fitness, should have come to them cap in hand; and as a natural consequence, the story, no doubt exaggerated when it reached him, loses nothing under his transforming and malicious pen. Stripped of its decorative flippancy, however, there remains but little that can really be regarded as "humiliating." Scott himself suggests, what is most unquestionably the case, that the blind man was the novelist's half-brother, afterwards Sir John Fielding; and it is extremely unlikely that the lady so discourteously characterised could have been any other than his wife, who, Lady Stuart tells us, "had few personal charms." There remain the "three Irishmen," who may, or may not, have been perfectly presentable members of society. At all events, their mere nationality, so rapidly decided upon, cannot be regarded as a stigma. That the company and entertainment were scarcely calculated to suit the superfine standard of Mr. Bathurst and Mr. Rigby may perhaps be conceded. Fielding was by no means a

rich man, and in his chequered career had possibly grown indifferent to minor decencies. Moreover, we are told by Murphy that, as a Westminster justice, he "kept his table open to those who had been his friends when young, and had impaired their own fortunes." Thus, it must always have been a more or less ragged regiment who met about that kindly Bow Street board; but that the fact reflects upon either the host or guests cannot be admitted for a moment. If the anecdote is discreditable to anyone it is to that facile retailer of *ana* and incorrigible society-gossip, Mr. Horace Walpole.

But while these unflattering tales were told of his private life, Fielding was fast becoming eminent in his public capacity. On the 12th of May 1749 he was unanimously chosen chairman of Quarter Sessions at Hicks's Hall (as the Clerkenwell Sessions House was then called); and on the 29th of June following he delivered a charge to the Westminster Grand Jury which is usually printed with his works, and which is still regarded by lawyers as a model exposition. It is at first a little unexpected to read his impressive and earnest denunciations of masquerades and theatres (in which latter, by the way, one Samuel Foote had very recently been following the example of the author of *Pasquin*); but Fielding the magistrate and Fielding the playwright were two different persons; and a long interval of changeful experience lay between them. In another part of his charge, which deals with the offence of libelling, it is possible that his very vigorous appeal was not the less forcible by reason of the personal attacks to which he had referred in the Preface to *David Simple*, the *Jacobite's Journal*, and elsewhere. His only other literary efforts

during this year appear to have been a little pamphlet entitled *A True State of the Case of Bosavern Penlez;* and a formal congratulatory letter to Lyttelton upon his second marriage, in which, while speaking gratefully of his own obligations to his friend, he endeavours to enlist his sympathies for Moore the fabulist who was also "about to marry." The pamphlet had reference to an occurrence which took place in July. Three sailors of the "Grafton" man-of-war had been robbed in a house of ill fame in the Strand. Failing to obtain redress, they attacked the house with their comrades, and wrecked it, causing a "dangerous riot," to which Fielding makes incidental reference in one of his letters to the Duke of Bedford, and which was witnessed by John Byrom, the poet and stenographer, in whose *Remains* it is described. Bosavern Penlez or Pen Lez, who had joined the crowd, and in whose possession some of the stolen property was found, was tried and hanged in September. His sentence, which was considered extremely severe, excited much controversy, and the object of Fielding's pamphlet was to vindicate the justice and necessity of his conviction.

Towards the close of 1749 Fielding fell seriously ill with fever aggravated by gout. It was indeed at one time reported that mortification had supervened; but under the care of Dr. Thomson, that dubious practitioner whose treatment of Winnington in 1746 had given rise to so much paper war, he recovered; and during 1750 was actively employed in his magisterial duties. At this period lawlessness and violence appear to have prevailed to an unusual extent in the metropolis, and the office of a Bow Street justice was no sinecure. Reform of some kind was felt on all sides to be urgently

required; and Fielding threw his two years' experience and his deductions therefrom into the form of a pamphlet entitled *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers, etc., with some Proposals for remedying this growing Evil.* It was dedicated to the then Lord High Chancellor, Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke, by whom, as well as by more recent legal authorities, it was highly appreciated. Like the *Charge to the Grand Jury*, it is a grave argumentative document, dealing seriously with luxury, drunkenness, gaming, and other prevalent vices. Once only, in an ironical passage respecting beaus and fine ladies, does the author remind us of the author of *Tom Jones.* As a rule, he is weighty, practical, and learned in the law. Against the curse of Gin-drinking, which, owing to the facilities for obtaining that liquor, had increased to an alarming extent among the poorer classes, he is especially urgent and energetic. He points out that it is not only making dreadful havoc in the present, but that it is enfeebling the race of the future, and he concludes—

"Some little Care on this Head is surely necessary: For tho' the Encrease of Thieves, and the Destruction of Morality; though the Loss of our Labourers, our Sailors, and our Soldiers, should not be sufficient Reasons, there is one which seems to be unanswerable, and that is, the Loss of our Gin-drinkers: Since, should the drinking this Poison be continued in its present Height during the next twenty Years, there will, by that Time, be very few of the common People left to drink it."

To the appeal thus made by Fielding in January 1751, Hogarth added his pictorial protest in the following month by his awful plate of *Gin Lane*, which, if not actually prompted by his friend's words, was certainly

inspired by the same crying evil. One good result of these efforts was the "Bill for restricting the Sale of Spirituous Liquors," to which the royal assent was given in June, and Fielding's connection with this enactment is practically acknowledged by Horace Walpole in his *Memoires of the Last ten Years of the Reign of George II.* The law was not wholly effectual, and was difficult to enforce; but it was not by any means without its good effects.[1]

Between the publication of the *Enquiry* and that of *Amelia* there is nothing of importance to chronicle except Fielding's connection with one of the events of 1751, the discovery of the Glastonbury waters. According to the account given in the *Gentleman's* for July in that year, a certain Matthew Chancellor had been cured of "an asthma and phthisic" of thirty years' standing by drinking from a spring near Chain Gate, Glastonbury, to which he had (so he alleged) been directed in a dream. The spring forthwith became famous; and in May an entry in the Historical Chronicle for Sunday, the 5th, records that above 10,000 persons had visited it, deserting Bristol, Bath, and other popular resorts. Numerous pamphlets

[1] The Rev. R. Hurd, afterwards Bishop of Worcester, an upright and scholarly, but formal and censorious man, whom Johnson called a "word-picker," and franker contemporaries "an old maid in breeches," has left a reference to Fielding at this time which is not flattering. "I dined with him [Ralph Allen] yesterday, where I met Mr. Fielding,—a poor emaciated, worn-out rake, whose gout and infirmities have got the better even of his buffoonery" (Letter to Balguy, dated "Inner Temple, 19th March, 1751.") That Fielding had not long before been dangerously ill, and that he was a martyr to gout, is fact: the rest is probably no more than the echo of a foregone conclusion, based upon report, or dislike to his works. Hurd praised Richardson and proscribed Sterne. He must have been wholly out of sympathy with the author of *Tom Jones*.

were published for and against the new waters; and a letter in their favour, which appeared in the *London Daily Advertiser* for the 31st August, signed "Z. Z.," is "supposed to be wrote" by "J—e F—g." Fielding was, as may be remembered, a Somersetshire man, Sharpham Park, his birthplace, being about three miles from Glastonbury; and he testifies to the "wonderful Effects of this salubrious Spring" in words which show that he had himself experienced them. "Having seen great Numbers of my Fellow Creatures under two of the most miserable Diseases human Nature can labour under, the Asthma and Evil, return from *Glastonbury* blessed with the Return of Health, and having myself been relieved from a Disorder which baffled the most skilful Physicians," justice to mankind (he says) obliges him to take notice of the subject. The letter is interesting, more as showing that, at this time, Fielding's health was broken, than as proving the efficacy of the cure; for, whatever temporary relief the waters afforded, it is clear (as Mr. Lawrence pertinently remarks) that he derived no permanent benefit from them. They must, however, have continued to attract visitors, as a pump-room was opened in August 1753; and, although they have now fallen into disuse, they were popular for many years.

But a more important occurrence than the discovery of the Somersetshire spring is a little announcement contained in Sylvanus Urban's list of publications for December 1751, No. 17 of which is "*Amelia*, in 4 books, 12mo; by Henry Fielding, Esq." The publisher, of course, was Andrew Millar; and the actual day of issue, as appears from the *General Advertiser*, was December the 19th, although the title-page, by anticipation, bore the

date of 1752. There were two mottoes, one of which was the appropriate—

> "*Felices ter & amplius*
> *Quos irrupta tenet Copula;*"

and the dedication, brief and simply expressed, was to Ralph Allen. As before, the "artful aid" of advertisement was invoked to whet the public appetite.

"To satisfy the earnest Demand of the Publick (says Millar), this Work has been printed at four Presses; but the Proprietor notwithstanding finds it impossible to get them (*sic*) bound in Time, without spoiling the Beauty of the Impression, and therefore will sell them sew'd at Half-a-Guinea."

This was open enough; but, according to Scott, Millar adopted a second expedient to assist *Amelia* with the booksellers.

"He had paid a thousand pounds for the copyright; and when he began to suspect that the work would be judged inferior to its predecessor, he employed the following stratagem to push it upon the trade. At a sale made to the booksellers, previous to the publication, Millar offered his friends his other publications on the usual terms of discount; but when he came to *Amelia*, he laid it aside, as a work expected to be in such demand, that he could not afford to deliver it to the trade in the usual manner. The *ruse* succeeded—the impression was anxiously bought up, and the bookseller relieved from every apprehension of a slow sale."

There were several reasons why—superficially speaking—*Amelia* should be "judged inferior to its predecessor." That it succeeded *Tom Jones* after an interval of little more than two years and eight months would be an important element in the comparison, if it were known at all definitely what period was occupied in writing *Tom Jones*. All that can be affirmed is that Fielding must have

been far more at leisure when he composed the earlier work than he could possibly have been when filling the office of a Bow Street magistrate. But, in reality, there is a much better explanation of the superiority of *Tom Jones* to *Amelia* than the merely empirical one of the time it took. *Tom Jones*, it has been admirably said by a French critic, "*est la condensation et le résumé de toute une existence. C'est le résultat et la conclusion de plusieurs années de passions et de pensées, la formule dernière et complète de la philosophie personnelle que l'on s'est faite sur tout ce que l'on a vu et senti.*" Such an experiment, argues Planche, is not twice repeated in a lifetime: the soil which produced so rich a crop can but yield a poorer aftermath. Behind *Tom Jones* there was the author's ebullient youth and manhood; behind *Amelia* but a section of his graver middle-age. There are other reasons for diversity in the manner of the book itself. The absence of the initial chapters, which gave so much variety to *Tom Jones*, tends to heighten the sense of impatience which, it must be confessed, occasionally creeps over the reader of *Amelia*, especially in those parts where, like Dickens at a later period, Fielding delays the progress of his narrative for the discussion of social problems and popular grievances. However laudable the desire (expressed in the dedication) "to expose some of the most glaring Evils, as well public as private, which at present infest this Country," the result in *Amelia*, from an art point of view, is as unsatisfactory as that of certain well-known pages of *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*. Again, there is a marked change in the attitude of the author,—a change not wholly reconcilable with the brief period which separates the two novels. However it may have chanced, whether from failing health

or otherwise, the Fielding of *Amelia* is suddenly a far older man than the Fielding of *Tom Jones*. The robust and irrepressible vitality, the full-veined delight of living, the energy of observation and strength of satire, which characterise the one give place in the other to a calmer retrospection, a more compassionate humanity, a gentler and more benignant criticism of life. That, as some have contended, *Amelia* shows an intellectual falling-off cannot for a moment be admitted, least of all upon the ground—as even so staunch an admirer as Mr. Keightley has allowed himself to believe—that certain of its incidents are obviously repeated from the *Modern Husband* and others of the author's plays. At this rate *Tom Jones* might be judged inferior to *Joseph Andrews*, because the Political Apothecary in the "Man of the Hill's" story has his prototype in the *Coffee-House Politician*, whose original is Addison's Upholsterer. The plain fact is, that Fielding recognised the failure of his plays as literature; he regarded them as dead; and freely transplanted what was good of his forgotten work into the work which he hoped would live. In this, it may be, there was something of indolence or haste; but assuredly there was no proof of declining powers.

If, for the sake of comparison, *Tom Jones* may be described as an animated and happily-constructed comedy, with more than the usual allowance of first-rate characters, *Amelia* must be regarded as a one-part piece, in which the rest of the *dramatis personæ* are wholly subordinate to the central figure. Captain Booth, the two Colonels, Atkinson and his wife, Miss Matthews, Dr. Harrison, Trent, the shadowy and maleficent "My Lord," are all less active on their own account than energised

and set in motion by Amelia. Round her they revolve; from her they obtain their impulse and their orbit. The best of the men, as studies, are Dr. Harrison and Colonel Bath. The former, who is as benevolent as Allworthy, is far more human, and it may be added, more humorous in well-doing. He is an individual rather than an abstraction. Bath, with his dignity and gun-cotton honour, is also admirable, but not entirely free from the objection made to some of Dickens's creations, that they are rather characteristics than characters. Captain William Booth, beyond his truth to nature, manifests no qualities that can compensate for his weakness, and the best that can be said of him is, that without it, his wife would have had no opportunity for the display of her magnanimity. There is also a certain want of consistency in his presentment; and when, in the residence of Mr. Bondum the bailiff, he suddenly develops an unexpected scholarship, it is impossible not to suspect that Fielding was unwilling to lose the opportunity of preserving some neglected scenes of the *Author's Farce*. Miss Matthews is a new and remarkable study of the *femme entretenue*, to parallel which, as in the case of Lady Bellaston, we must go to Balzac; Mrs. James, again, is an excellent example of that vapid and colourless nonentity, the "person of condition." Mrs. Bennet, although apparently more contradictory and less intelligible, is nevertheless true to her past history and present environments; while her husband, the sergeant, with his concealed and reverential love for his beautiful foster-sister, has had a long line of descendants in the modern novel. It is upon Amelia, however, that the author has lavished all his pains, and there is no more touching

portrait in the whole of fiction than this heroic and immortal one of feminine goodness and forbearance. It is needless to repeat that it is painted from Fielding's first wife, or to insist that, as Lady Mary was fully persuaded, "several of the incidents he mentions are real matters of fact." That famous scene where Amelia is spreading, for the recreant who is losing his money at the King's Arms, the historic little supper of hashed mutton which she has cooked with her own hands, and denying herself a glass of white wine to save the paltry sum of sixpence, "while her Husband was paying a Debt of several Guineas incurred by the Ace of Trumps being in the Hands of his Adversary"—a scene which it is impossible to read aloud without a certain huskiness in the throat, —the visits to the pawnbroker and the sponging-house, the robbery by the little servant, the encounter at Vauxhall, and some of the pretty vignettes of the children, are no doubt founded on personal recollections. Whether the pursuit to which the heroine is exposed had any foundation in reality it is impossible to say; and there is a passage in Murphy's memoir which almost reads as if it had been penned with the express purpose of anticipating any too harshly literal identification of Booth with Fielding, since we are told of the latter that "though disposed to gallantry by his strong animal spirits, and the vivacity of his passions, he was remarkable for tenderness *and constancy to his wife* [the italics are ours], and the strongest affection for his children." These, however, are questions beside the matter, which is the conception of *Amelia*. That remains, and must remain for ever, in the words of one of Fielding's greatest modern successors, a figure

"wrought with love . . .
Nought modish in it, pure and noble lines
Of generous womanhood that fits all time."

There are many women who forgive; but Amelia does more—she not only forgives, but she forgets. The passage in which she exhibits to her contrite husband the letter received long before from Miss Matthews is one of the noblest in literature; and if it had been recorded that Fielding—like Thackeray on a memorable occasion—had here slapped his fist upon the table, and said "*That* is a stroke of genius!" it would scarcely have been a thing to be marvelled at. One final point in connection with her may be noted, which has not always been borne in mind by those who depict good women — much after Hogarth's fashion — without a head. She is not by any means a simpleton, and it is misleading to describe her as a tender, fluttering little creature, who, because she can cook her husband's supper, and caresses him with the obsolete name of Billy, must necessarily be contemptible. On the contrary, she has plenty of ability and good sense, with a fund of humour which enables her to slily enjoy and even gently satirise the fine lady airs of Mrs. James. Nor is it necessary to contend that her faculties are subordinated to her affections; but rather that conjugal fidelity and Christian charity are inseparable alike from her character and her creed.

As illustrating the tradition that Fielding depicted his first wife in Sophia Western and in Amelia, it has been remarked that there is no formal description of her personal appearance in his last novel, her portrait having already been drawn at length in *Tom Jones*. But the

following depreciatory sketch by Mrs. James is worth quoting, not only because it indirectly conveys the impression of a very handsome woman, but because it is also an admirable specimen of Fielding's lighter manner:—

"'In the first place,' cries Mrs. James, 'her eyes are too large; and she hath a look with them that I don't know how to describe; but I know I don't like it. Then her eyebrows are too large; therefore, indeed, she doth all in her power to remedy this with her pincers; for if it was not for those, her eyebrows would be preposterous.—Then her nose, as well proportioned as it is, has a visible scar on one side.[1]—Her neck likewise is too protuberant for the genteel size, especially as she laces herself; for no woman, in my opinion, can be genteel who is not entirely flat before. And lastly, she is both too short, and too tall.—Well, you may laugh, Mr. James, I know what I mean, though I cannot well express it. I mean, that she is too tall for a pretty woman, and too short for a fine woman.—There is such a thing as a kind of insipid medium—a kind of something that is neither one thing or another. I know not how to express it more clearly; but when I say such a one is a pretty woman, a pretty thing, a pretty creature, you know very well I mean a little woman; and when I say such a one is a very fine woman, a very fine person of a woman, to be sure I must mean a tall woman. Now a woman that is between both, is certainly neither the one nor the other."

The ingenious expedients of Andrew Millar, to which reference has been made, appear to have so far succeeded that a new edition of *Amelia* was called for on the day of publication. Johnson, to whom we owe this story, was thoroughly captivated with the book. Notwithstanding that on another occasion he paradoxically asserted that the author was "a blockhead"—

[1] See note on this subject in chapter iv., and Appendix No. III.

"a barren rascal," he read it through without stopping, and pronounced Mrs. Booth to be "the most pleasing heroine of all the romances." Richardson, on the other hand, found "the characters and situations so wretchedly low and dirty" that he could not get farther than the first volume. With the professional reviewers, a certain Criticulus in the *Gentleman's* excepted, it seems to have fared but ill; and although these adverse verdicts, if they exist, are now more or less inaccessible, Fielding has apparently summarised most of them in a mock-trial of *Amelia* before the "*Court of* Censorial Enquiry," the proceedings of which are recorded in Nos. 7 and 8 of the *Covent-Garden Journal*. The book is indicted upon the Statute of Dulness, and the heroine is charged with being a "*low* Character," a "*Milksop*," and a "*Fool*;" with lack of spirit and fainting too frequently; with dressing her children, cooking and other "servile Offices;" with being too forgiving to her husband; and lastly, as may be expected, with the inconsistency, already amply referred to, of being "a Beauty *without a nose*." Dr. Harrison and Colonel Bath are arraigned much in the same fashion. After some evidence against her has been tendered, and "a Great Number of Beaus, Rakes, fine Ladies, and several formal Persons with bushy Wigs, and Canes at their Noses," are preparing to supplement it, a grave man steps forward, and, begging to be heard, delivers what must be regarded as Fielding's final apology for his last novel:—

"If you, Mr. Censor, are yourself a Parent, you will view me with Compassion when I declare I am the Father of this poor Girl the Prisoner at the Bar; nay, when I go further and avow, that of all my Offspring she is my favourite Child.

I can truly say that I bestowed a more than ordinary Pains in her Education; in which I will venture to affirm, I followed the Rules of all those who are acknowledged to have writ best on the Subject; and if her Conduct be fairly examined, she will be found to deviate very little from the strictest Observation of all those Rules; neither Homer nor Virgil pursued them with greater Care than myself, and the candid and learned Reader will see that the latter was the noble model, which I made use of on this Occasion.

"I do not think my Child is entirely free from Faults. I know nothing human that is so; but surely she doth not deserve the Rancour with which she hath been treated by the Public. However, it is not my Intention, at present, to make any Defence; but shall submit to a Compromise, which hath been always allowed in this Court in all Prosecutions for Dulness. I do, therefore, solemnly declare to you, Mr. Censor, that I will trouble the World no more with any Children of mine by the same Muse."

Whether sincere or not, this last statement appears to have afforded the greatest gratification to Richardson. "Will I leave you to Captain Booth?" he writes triumphantly to Mrs. Donnellan, in answer to a question she had put to him. "Captain Booth, Madam, has done his own business. Mr. Fielding has over-written himself, or rather *under*-written; and in his own journal seems ashamed of his last piece; and has promised that the same Muse shall write no more for him. The piece, in short, is as dead as if it had been published forty years ago, as to sale." There is much to the same effect in the worthy little printer's correspondence; but enough has been quoted to show how intolerable to the super-sentimental creator of the high-souled and heroic Clarissa was his rival's plainer and more practical picture of matronly virtue and modesty. In cases of this kind, *parva seges satis est*, and Amelia has long since outlived

both rival malice and contemporary coldness. It is a proof of her author's genius, that she is even more intelligible to our age than she was to her own.

At the end of the second volume of the first edition of her history was a notice announcing the immediate appearance of the above-mentioned *Covent-Garden Journal*, a bi-weekly paper, in which Fielding, under the style and title of Sir Alexander Drawcansir, assumed the office of Censor of Great Britain. The first number of this new venture was issued on January the 4th, 1752, and the price was threepence. In plan, and general appearance, it resembled the *Jacobite's Journal*, consisting mainly of an introductory Essay, paragraphs of current news, often accompanied by pointed editorial comment, miscellaneous articles, and advertisements. One of the features of the earlier numbers was a burlesque, but not very successful, Journal of the present Paper War, which speedily involved the author in actual hostilities with the notorious quack and adventurer Dr. John Hill, who for some time had been publishing certain impudent lucubrations in the *London Daily Advertiser* under the heading of *The Inspector;* and also with Smollett, whom he (Fielding) had ridiculed in his second number, perhaps on account of that little paragraph in the first edition of *Peregrine Pickle*, to which reference was made in an earlier chapter. Smollett, always irritable and combative, retorted by a needlessly coarse and venomous pamphlet, in which, under the name of "Habbakkuk Hilding, Justice, Dealer and Chapman," Fielding was attacked with indescribable brutality. Another, and seemingly unprovoked, adversary whom the *Journal of the War* brought upon him was Bonnel Thornton, after-

wards joint-author with George Colman of the *Connoisseur*, who, in a production styled *Have at you All; or, The Drury Lane Journal*, lampooned Sir Alexander with remarkable rancour and assiduity. Mr. Lawrence has treated these "quarrels of authors" at some length; and they also have some record in the curious collections of the elder Disraeli. As a general rule, Fielding was far less personal and much more scrupulous in his choice of weapons than those who assailed him; but the conflict was an undignified one, and, as Scott has justly said, "neither party would obtain honour by an inquiry into the cause or conduct of its hostilities."

In the enumeration of Fielding's works it is somewhat difficult (if due proportion be observed) to assign any real importance to efforts like the *Covent-Garden Journal*. Compared with his novels, they are insignificant enough. But even the worst work of such a man is notable in its way; and Fielding's contributions to the *Journal* are by no means to be despised. They are shrewd lay sermons, often exhibiting much out-of-the way erudition, and nearly always distinguished by some of his personal qualities. In No. 33, on "Profanity," there is a character-sketch which, for vigour and vitality, is worthy of his best days; and there is also a very thoughtful paper on "Reading," containing a kindly reference to "the ingenious Author of *Clarissa*," which should have mollified that implacable moralist. In this essay it is curious to notice that, while Fielding speaks with due admiration of Shakespeare and Molière, Lucian, Cervantes, and Swift, he condemns Rabelais and Aristophanes, although in the invocation already quoted from *Tom Jones*, he had included both these

authors among the models he admired. Another paper in the *Covent-Garden Journal* is especially interesting because it affords a clue to a project of Fielding's which unfortunately remained a project. This was a Translation of the works of Lucian, to be undertaken in conjunction with his old colleague, the Rev. William Young. Proposals were advertised, and the enterprise was duly heralded by a "puff preliminary," in which Fielding, while abstaining from anything directly concerning his own abilities, observes, "I will only venture to say, that no Man seems so likely to translate an Author well, as he who hath formed his Stile upon that very Author"—a sentence which, taken in connection with the references to Lucian in *Tom Thumb*, the *Champion* and elsewhere, must be accepted as distinctly autobiographic. The last number of the *Covent-Garden Journal* (No. 72) was issued in November 1752. By this time Sir Alexander seems to have thoroughly wearied of his task. With more gravity than usual he takes leave of letters, begging the Public that they will not henceforth father on him the dulness and scurrility of his worthy contemporaries; "since I solemnly declare that unless in revising my former Works, I have at present no Intention to hold any further Correspondence with the gayer Muses."

The labour of conducting the *Covent-Garden Journal* must have been the more severe in that, during the whole period of its existence, the editor was vigorously carrying out his duties as a magistrate. The prison and political scenes in *Amelia*, which contemporary critics regarded as redundant, and which even to us are more curious than essential, testify at once to his growing

interest in reform, and his keen appreciation of the defects which existed both in the law itself and in the administration of the law; while the numerous cases heard before him, and periodically reported in his paper by his clerk, afford ample evidence of his judicial activity. How completely he regarded himself (Bathurst and Rigby notwithstanding) as the servant of the public, may be gathered from the following regularly repeated notice:—

"To the PUBLIC.

"All Persons who shall for the Future, suffer by Robbers, Burglars, &c., are desired immediately to bring, or send, the best Description they can of such Robbers, &c., with the Time and Place, and Circumstances of the Fact, to Henry Fielding, Esq.; at his House in Bow Street."

Another instance of his energy in his vocation is to be found in the little collection of cases entitled *Examples of the Interposition of Providence, in the Detection and Punishment of Murder*, published, with Preface and Introduction, in April 1752, and prompted, as advertisement announces, "by the many horrid Murders committed within this last Year." It appeared, as a matter of fact, only a few days after the execution at Oxford, for parricide, of the notorious Miss Mary Blandy, and might be assumed to have a more or less timely intention; but the purity of Fielding's purpose is placed beyond a doubt by the fact that he freely distributed it in court to those whom it seemed calculated to profit.

The only other works of Fielding which precede the posthumously published *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* are the *Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor*, etc., a pamphlet dedicated to the Right Honble. Henry Pelham, published in January 1753; and the

Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning, published in March. The former, which the hitherto unfriendly *Gentleman's* patronisingly styles an "excellent piece," conceived in a manner which gives "a high idea of his [the author's] present temper, manners and ability," is an elaborate project for the erection, *inter alia*, of a vast building, of which a plan, "drawn by an Eminent Hand," was given, to be called the County-house, capable of containing 5000 inmates, and including work-rooms, prisons, an infirmary, and other features, the details of which are too minute to be repeated in these pages, even if they had received any attention from the Legislature, which they did not. The latter was Fielding's contribution to the extraordinary judicial puzzle, which agitated London in 1753-4. It is needless to do more than recall its outline. On the 29th of January 1753, one Elizabeth Canning, a domestic servant aged eighteen or thereabouts, and who had hitherto borne an excellent character, returned to her mother, having been missing from the house of her master, a carpenter in Aldermanbury, since the 1st of the same month. She was half starved and half clad, and alleged that she had been abducted, and confined during her absence in a house on the Hertford Road, from which she had just escaped. This house she afterwards identified as that of one Mother Wells, a person of very indifferent reputation. An ill-favoured old gipsy woman named Mary Squires was also declared by her to have been the main agent in ill-using and detaining her. The gipsy, it is true, averred that at the time of the occurrence she was a hundred and twenty miles away; but Canning persisted in her statement. Among other people before whom she came was

Fielding, who examined her, as well as a young woman called Virtue Hall, who appeared subsequently as one of Canning's witnesses. Fielding seems to have been strongly impressed by her appearance and her story, and his pamphlet (which was contradicted in every particular by his adversary, John Hill) gives a curious and not very edifying picture of the magisterial procedure of the time. In February, Wells and Squires were tried; Squires was sentenced to death, and Wells to imprisonment and burning in the hand. Then, by the exertions of the Lord Mayor, Sir Crisp Gascoyne, who doubted the justice of the verdict, Squires was respited and pardoned. Forthwith London was split up into Egyptian and Canningite factions; a hailstorm of pamphlets set in; portraits and caricatures of the principal personages were in all the print shops; and, to use Churchill's words,

> "—*Betty Canning* was at least,
> With *Gascoyne's* help, a six months feast."

In April 1754, however, Fate so far prevailed against her that she herself, in turn, was tried for perjury. Thirty-eight witnesses swore that Squires had been in Dorsetshire; twenty-seven that she had been seen in Middlesex. After some hesitation, quite of a piece with the rest of the proceedings, the jury found Canning guilty; and she was transported for seven years. At the end of her sentence she returned to England to receive a legacy of £500, which had been left her by an enthusiastic old lady of Newington-green.[1] Her "case" is full of the most inexplicable contradictions; and it occupies in the *State Trials* some four hundred and twenty closely-printed

pages of the most curious and picturesque eighteenth-century details. But how, from the 1st of January 1753 to the 29th of the same month, Elizabeth Canning really did manage to spend her time is a secret that, to this day, remains undivulged.

[1] So says the *Annual Register* for 1761, p. 179. But according to later accounts (*Gent. Mag.* xliii. 413), she never returned, dying in 1773 at Weathersfield in Connecticut.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOURNAL OF A VOYAGE TO LISBON.

In March 1753, when Fielding published his pamphlet on Elizabeth Canning, his life was plainly drawing to a close. His energies indeed were unabated, as may be gathered from a brief record in the *Gentleman's* for that month, describing his judicial raid, at four in the morning, upon a gaming-room, where he suspected certain highwaymen to be assembled. But his body was enfeebled by disease, and he knew he could not look for length of days. He had lived not long, but much; he had seen in little space, as the motto to *Tom Jones* announced, "the manners of many men;" and now that, prematurely, the inevitable hour approached, he called Cicero and Horace to his aid, and prepared to meet his fate with philosophic fortitude. Between

> "*Quem fors dierum cunque dabit, lucro*
> *Appone,*"

and

> "*Grata superveniet, quæ non sperabitur, hora,*

he tells us in his too-little-consulted *Proposal for the Poor*, he had schooled himself to regard events with equanimity, striving above all, in what remained to him of

life, to perform the duties of his office efficiently, and solicitous only for those he must leave behind him. Henceforward his literary efforts should be mainly philanthropic and practical, not without the hope that, if successful, they might be the means of securing some provision for his family. Of fiction he had taken formal leave in the trial of *Amelia;* and of lighter writing generally in the last paper of the *Covent-Garden Journal.* But, if we may trust his Introduction, the amount of work he had done for his poor-law project must have been enormous, for he had read and considered all the laws upon the subject, as well as everything that had been written on it since the days of Elizabeth, yet he speaks nevertheless as one over whose head the sword had all the while been impending:—

"The Attempt, indeed, is such, that the Want of Success can scarce be called a Disappointment, tho' I shall have lost much Time, and misemployed much Pains; and what is above all, shall miss the Pleasure of thinking that in the Decline of my Health and Life, I have conferred a great and lasting Benefit on my Country."

In words still more resigned and dignified, he concludes the book:—

His enemies, he says, will no doubt "discover, that instead of intending a Provision for the Poor, I have been carving out one for myself,[1] and have very cunningly projected to build myself a fine House at the Expence of the Public. This would be to act in direct Opposition to the Advice of my above Master [*i.e.* Horace]; it would be indeed

Struere domos immemor sepulchri.

Those who do not know me, may believe this; but those

[1] Presumably as Governor of the proposed County-house.

who do, will hardly be so deceived by that Chearfulness which was always natural to me ; and which, I thank God, my Conscience doth not reprove me for, to imagine that I am not sensible of my declining Constitution. . . . Ambition or Avarice can no longer raise a Hope, or dictate any Scheme to me, who have no further Design than to pass my short Remainder of Life in some Degree of Ease, and barely to preserve my Family from being the Objects of any such Laws as I have here proposed."

With the exception of the above, and kindred passages quoted from the Prefaces to the *Miscellanies* and the Plays, the preceding pages, as the reader has no doubt observed, contain little of a purely autobiographical character. Moreover, the anecdotes related of Fielding by Murphy and others have not always been of such a nature as to inspire implicit confidence in their accuracy, while of the very few letters that have been referred to, none have any of those intimate and familiar touches which reveal the individuality of the writer. But from the middle of 1753 up to a short time before his death, Fielding has himself related the story of his life, in one of the most unfeigned and touching little tracts in our own or any other literature. The only thing which, at the moment, suggests itself for comparison with the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* is the letter and dedication which Fielding's predecessor, Cervantes, prefixes to his last romance of *Persiles and Sigismunda*. In each case the words are animated by the same uncomplaining kindliness—the same gallant and indomitable spirit; in each case the writer is a dying man. Cervantes survived the date of his letter to the Conde de Lemos but three days; and the *Journal*, says Fielding's editor (probably his brother John), was "finished almost at the same

period with life." It was written, from its author's account, in those moments of the voyage when, his womankind being sea-sick, and the crew wholly absorbed in working the ship, he was thrown upon his own resources, and compelled to employ his pen to while away the time. The Preface, and perhaps the Introduction, were added after his arrival at Lisbon, in the brief period before his death. The former is a semi-humorous apology for voyage-writing; the latter gives an account of the circumstances which led to this, his last expedition in search of health.

At the beginning of August 1753, Fielding tells us, having taken the Duke of Portland's medicine[1] for near a year, "the effects of which had been the carrying off the symptoms of a lingering imperfect gout," Mr. Ranby, the King's Sergeant-Surgeon[2] (to whom complimentary reference had been made in the Man of the Hill's story in *Tom Jones*), with other able physicians, advised him "to go immediately to Bath." He accordingly engaged lodgings, and prepared to leave town forthwith. While he was making ready for his departure, and was "almost fatigued to death with several long examinations, relating to five different murders, all committed within the space of a week, by different gangs of street robbers," he received a message from the Duke of Newcastle, afterwards Premier, through that Mr. Carrington whom Walpole calls "the cleverest of all ministerial terriers," requesting his attendance in Lincoln's-Inn

[1] A popular eighteenth-century gout-powder, but as old as Galen. The receipt for it is given in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxiii., 579.

[2] Mr. Ranby was also the friend of Hogarth, who etched his house at Chiswick.

Fields (Newcastle House). Being lame, and greatly over-taxed, Fielding excused himself. But the Duke sent Mr. Carrington again next day, and Fielding with great difficulty obeyed the summons. After waiting some three hours in the antechamber (no unusual feature, as Lord Chesterfield informs us, of the Newcastle audiences), a gentleman was deputed to consult him as to the devising of a plan for putting an immediate end to the murders and robberies which had become so common. This, although the visit cost him "a severe cold," Fielding at once undertook. A proposal was speedily drawn out and submitted to the Privy Council. Its essential features were the employment of a known informer, and the provision of funds for that purpose.

By the time this scheme was finally approved, Fielding's disorder had "turned to a deep jaundice," in which case the Bath waters were generally regarded as "almost infallible." But his eager desire to break up "this gang of villains and cut-throats" delayed him in London; and a day or two after he had received a portion of the stipulated grant, (which portion, it seems, took several weeks in arriving), the whole body were entirely dispersed,—"seven of them were in actual custody, and the rest driven, some out of town, and others out of the kingdom." In examining them, however, and in taking depositions, which often occupied whole days and sometimes nights, although he had the satisfaction of knowing that during the dark months of November and December the metropolis enjoyed complete immunity from murder and robbery, his own health was "reduced to the last extremity."

"Mine (he says) was now no longer what is called a

Bath case," nor, if it had been, could his strength have sustained the "intolerable fatigue" of the journey thither. He accordingly gave up his Bath lodgings, which he had hitherto retained, and went into the country "in a very weak and deplorable condition." He was suffering from jaundice, dropsy, and asthma, under which combination of diseases his body was "so entirely emaciated, that it had lost all its muscular flesh." He had begun with reason "to look on his case as desperate," and might fairly have regarded himself as voluntarily sacrificed to the good of the public. But he is far too honest to assign his action to philanthropy alone. His chief object (he owns) had been, if possible, to secure some provision for his family in the event of his death. Not being a "trading justice,"—that is, a justice who took bribes from suitors, like Justice Thrasher in *Amelia*, or Justice Squeez'um in the *Coffee House Politician*,—his post at Bow Street had scarcely been a lucrative one. "By composing, instead of inflaming, the quarrels of porters and beggars (which I blush when I say hath not been universally practised) and by refusing to take a shilling from a man who most undoubtedly would not have had another left, I had reduced an income of about 500*l* a year of the dirtiest money upon earth to little more than 300*l*, a considerable proportion of which remained with my clerk." Besides the residue of his justice's fees, he had also, he informs us, a yearly pension from the Government, "out of the public service-money," but the amount is not stated. The rest of his means, as far as can be ascertained, were derived from his literary labours. To a man of his lavish disposition, and with the claims of a family upon

him, this could scarcely have been a competence; and if, as appears not very clearly from a note in the *Journal*, he now resigned his office to his half-brother, who had long been his assistant, his private affairs at the beginning of the winter of 1753-54 must, as he says, have "had but a gloomy aspect." In the event of his death his wife and children could have no hope except from some acknowledgment by the Government of his past services.

Meanwhile his diseases were slowly gaining ground. The terrible winter of 1753-54, which, from the weather record in the *Gentleman's*, seems, with small intermission, to have been prolonged far into April, was especially trying to asthmatic patients, and consequently wholly against him. In February he returned to town, and put himself under the care of the notorious Dr. Joshua Ward of Pall Mall, by whom he was treated and tapped for dropsy.[1] He was at his worst, he says, "on that memorable day when the public lost Mr. Pelham (March 6th);" but from this time, he began, under Ward's medicines, to acquire "some little degree of strength," although his dropsy increased. With May came the long-delayed spring, and he moved to Fordhook,[2] a "little house" belonging to him at Ealing, the air of which place then enjoyed a considerable reputation, being reckoned the best in Middlesex,

[1] Ward appears in Hogarth's *Consultation of Physicians*, 1736, and in Pope—"Ward try'd on Puppies, and the Poor, his Drop." He was a quack, but must have possessed considerable ability. Bolingbroke wished Pope to consult him in 1744; and he attended George II. There is an account of him in Nichols's *Genuine Works of Hogarth*, i. 89.

[2] It lay on the Uxbridge Road, a little beyond Acton, and nearly opposite the present Ealing Common Station of the Metropolitan District Railway. The site is now occupied by a larger house bearing the same name.

"and far superior to that of Kensington Gravel-Pits." Here a re-perusal of Bishop Berkeley's *Siris*, which had been recalled to his memory by Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, "the inimitable author of the *Female Quixote*," set him drinking tar-water with apparent good effect, except as far as his chief ailment was concerned. The applications of the trocar became more frequent: the summer, if summer it could be called, was "mouldering away;" and winter, with all its danger to an invalid, was drawing on apace. Nothing seemed hopeful but removal to a warmer climate. Aix in Provence was at first thought of, but the idea was abandoned on account of the difficulties of the journey. Lisbon, where Doddridge had died three years before, was then chosen; a passage in a vessel trading to the port was engaged for the sick man, his wife, daughter, and two servants; and after some delays they started. At this point the actual *Journal* begins with a well-remembered entry:—

"*Wednesday, June 26th*, 1754.—On this day, the most melancholy sun I had ever beheld arose, and found me awake at my house at Fordhook. By the light of this sun, I was, in my own opinion, last to behold and take leave of some of those creatures on whom I doated with a mother-like fondness, guided by nature and passion, and uncured and unhardened by all the doctrine of that philosophical school where I had learnt to bear pains and to despise death.

"In this situation, as I could not conquer nature, I submitted entirely to her, and she made as great a fool of me as she had ever done of any woman whatsoever: under pretence of giving me leave to enjoy, she drew me to suffer the company of my little ones, during eight hours; and I doubt not whether, in that time, I did not undergo more than in all my distemper.

"At twelve precisely my coach was at the door, which was no sooner told me than I kiss'd my children round, and

went into it with some little resolution. My wife, who behaved more like a heroine and philosopher, tho' at the same time the tenderest mother in the world, and my eldest daughter, followed me ; some friends went with us, and others here took their leave ; and I heard my behaviour applauded, with many murmurs and praises to which I well knew I had no title ; as all other such philosophers may, if they have any modesty, confess on the like occasions."

Two hours later the party reached Rotherhithe. Here, with the kindly assistance of his and Hogarth's friend, Mr. Saunders Welch, High Constable of Holborn, the sick man, who, at this time, "had no use of his limbs," was carried to a boat, and hoisted in a chair over the ship's side. This latter journey, far more fatiguing to the sufferer than the twelve miles ride which he had previously undergone, was not rendered more easy to bear by the jests of the watermen and sailors, to whom his ghastly, death-stricken countenance seemed matter for merriment; and he was greatly rejoiced to find himself safely seated in the cabin. The voyage, however, already more than once deferred, was not yet to begin. Wednesday, being King's Proclamation Day, the vessel could not be cleared at the Custom House ; and on Thursday the skipper announced that he should not set out until Saturday. As Fielding's complaint was again becoming troublesome, and no surgeon was available on board, he sent for his friend, the famous anatomist, Mr. Hunter, of Covent Garden,[1] by whom he was tapped, to his own relief, and the admiration of the simple sea-captain, who (he writes) was greatly impressed by "the heroic constancy, with which I had

[1] This must have been William Hunter, for in 1754 his more distinguished brother John had not yet become celebrated.

borne an operation that is attended with scarce any degree of pain." On Sunday the vessel dropped down to Gravesend, where, on the next day, Mr. Welch, who until then had attended them, took his leave; and, Fielding, relieved by the trocar of any immediate apprehensions of discomfort, might, in spite of his forlorn case, have been fairly at ease. He had a new concern, however, in the state of Mrs. Fielding, who was in agony with toothache, which successive operators failed to relieve; and there is an unconsciously touching little picture of the sick man and his skipper, who was deaf, sitting silently over "a small bowl of punch" in the narrow cabin, for fear of waking the pain-worn sleeper in the adjoining state-room. Of his second wife, as may be gathered from the opening words of the *Journal*, Fielding always speaks with the warmest affection and gratitude. Elsewhere, recording a storm off the Isle of Wight, he says, "My dear wife and child must pardon me, if what I did not conceive to be any great evil to myself, I was not much terrified with the thoughts of happening to them: in truth, I have often thought they are both too good, and too gentle, to be trusted to the power of any man." With what a tenacity of courtesy he treated the whilom Mary Daniel may be gathered from the following vignette of insolence in office, which can be taken as a set-off to the malicious tattle of Walpole:—

"Soon after their departure [*i.e.* Mr. Welch and a companion], our cabin, where my wife and I were sitting together, was visited by two ruffians, whose appearance greatly corresponded with that of the sheriff's, or rather the knight-marshal's bailiffs. One of these, especially, who seemed to affect a more than ordinary degree of rudeness and insolence,

came in without any kind of ceremony, with a broad gold lace upon his hat, which was cocked with much military fierceness on his head. An inkhorn at his button-hole, and some papers in his hand, sufficiently assured me what he was, and I asked him if he and his companions were not custom-house officers; he answered with sufficient dignity that they were, as an information which he seemed to consider would strike the hearer with awe, and suppress all further inquiry; but on the contrary I proceeded to ask of what rank he was in the Custom house, and receiving an answer from his companion, as I remember, that the gentleman was a riding surveyor; I replied, that he might be a riding surveyor, but could be no gentleman, for that none who had any title to that denomination would break into the presence of a lady, without any apology, or even moving his hat. He then took his covering from his head, and laid it on the table, saying, he asked pardon, and blamed the mate, who should, he said, have informed him if any persons of distinction were below. I told him he might guess from our appearance (which, perhaps, was rather more than could be said with the strictest adherence to truth) that he was before a gentleman and lady, which should teach him to be very civil in his behaviour, tho' we should not happen to be of the number whom the world calls people of fashion and distinction. However, I said, that as he seemed sensible of his error, and had asked pardon, the lady would permit him to put his hat on again, if he chose it. This he refused with some degree of surliness, and failed not to convince me that, if I should condescend to become more gentle, he would soon grow more rude."

The date of this occurrence was July the 1st. On the evening of the same day they weighed anchor and managed to reach the Nore. For more than a week they were wind-bound in the Downs, but on the 11th they anchored off Ryde, from which place, on the next morning, Fielding despatched the following letter to his brother. Besides giving the names of the captain and

the ship, which are carefully suppressed in the *Journal*,[1] it is especially interesting as being the last letter written by Fielding of which we have any knowledge:—

> "On board the Queen of Portugal, Rich^{d} Veal at anchor on the Mother Bank, off Ryde, to the Care of the Post Master of Portsmouth—this is my Date and y^{r} Direction.
>
> July 12 1754.

"Dear Jack, After receiving that agreeable Lre from Mess^{rs}. Fielding and Co., we weighed on monday morning and sailed from Deal to the Westward Four Days long but inconceivably pleasant Passage brought us yesterday to an Anchor on the Mother Bank, on the Back of the Isle of Wight, where we had last Night in Safety the Pleasure of hearing the Winds roar over our Heads in as violent a Tempest as I have known, and where my only Consideration were the Fears which must possess any Friend of ours, (if there is happily any such) who really makes our Wellbeing the Object of his Concern especially if such Friend should be totally inexperienced in Sea Affairs. I therefore beg that on the Day you receive this M^{rs} Daniel[2] may know that we are just risen from Breakfast in Health and Spirits this twelfth Instant at 9 in the morning. Our Voyage hath proved fruitful in Adventures all which being to be written in the Book, you must postpone y^{r} Curiosity As the Incidents which

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[1] Probably this was intentional. Notwithstanding the statement in the "Dedication to the Public" that the text is given "as it came from the hands of the author," the *Journal*, in the first issue of 1755, seems to have been considerably "edited." "Mrs. Francis" (the Ryde landlady) is there called "Mrs. Humphrys," and the portrait of the military coxcomb, together with some particulars of Fielding's visit to the Duke of Newcastle, and other details, are wholly omitted.

[2] It will be remembered that the maiden-name of Fielding's second wife, as given in the Register of St. Bene't's, was Mary Daniel. "Mrs. Daniel" was therefore, in all probability, Fielding's mother-in-law; and it may reasonably be assumed that she had remained in charge of the little family at Fordhook.

fall under y^r^ Cognizance will possibly be consigned to Oblivion, do give them to us as they pass. Tell y^r^ Neighbour I am much obliged to him for recommending me to the Care of a most able and experienced Seaman to whom other Captains seem to pay such Deference that they attend and watch his Motions, and think themselves only safe when they act under his Direction and Example. Our Ship in Truth seems to give Laws on the Water with as much Authority and Superiority as you Dispense Laws to the Public and Examples to y^r^ Brethren in Commission. Please to direct y^r^ Answer to me on Board as in the Date, if gone to be returned, and then send it by the Post and Pacquet to Lisbon to

"Y^r^ affec^t^ Brother

"H. FIELDING

"To John Fielding Esq. at his House in
Bow Street Cov^t^ Garden London."

As the *Queen of Portugal* did not leave Ryde until the 23d, it is possible that Fielding received a reply. During the remainder of this desultory voyage he continued to beguile his solitary hours—hours of which we are left to imagine the physical torture and monotony, for he says but little of himself—by jottings and notes of the, for the most part, trivial accidents of his progress. That happy cheerfulness, of which he spoke in the *Proposal for the Poor*, had not yet deserted him; and there are moments when he seems rather on a pleasure-trip than a forlorn pilgrimage in search of health. At Ryde, where, for change of air, he went ashore, he chronicles, after many discomforts from the most disobliging of landladies (let the name of Mrs. Francis go down to posterity!), "the best, the pleasantest, and the merriest meal, [in a barn] with more appetite, more real, solid luxury, and more festivity, than was ever seen in an entertainment at White's." At

Torbay, he expatiates upon the merits and flavour of the John Dory, a specimen of which "gloriously regaled" the party, and furnished him with a pretext for a dissertation on the London Fish Supply. Another page he devotes to commendation of the excellent *Vinum Pomonæ*, or Southam cyder, supplied by "Mr. Giles Leverance of Cheeshurst, near Dartmouth in Devon," of which, for the sum of five pounds ten shillings, he extravagantly purchases three hogsheads, one for himself, and the others as presents for friends, among whom no doubt was kindly Mr. Welch. Here and there he sketches, with but little abatement of his earlier gaiety and vigour, the human nature around him. Of the objectionable Ryde landlady and her husband there are portraits not much inferior to those of the Tow-wouses in *Joseph Andrews*, while the military fop, who visits his uncle the captain off Spithead, is drawn with all the insight which depicted the vagaries of Ensign Northerton, whom indeed the real hero of the *Journal* not a little resembles. The best character sketch, however, in the whole is that of Captain Richard Veal himself (one almost feels inclined to wonder whether he was in any way related to the worthy lady whose apparition visited Mrs. Bargrave at Canterbury !), but it is of necessity somewhat dispersed. It has also an additional attraction, because, if we remember rightly, it is Fielding's sole excursion into the domain of Smollett. The rough old sea-dog of the Haddock and Vernon period, who had been a privateer; and who still, as skipper of a merchant-man, when he visits a friend or gallants the ladies, decorates himself with a scarlet coat, cockade, and sword; who gives vent to a kind of Irish howl when his favourite kitten is suffocated under a feather bed; and

falls abjectly on his knees when threatened with the dreadful name of Law, is a character which, in its surly good-humour and sensitive dignity, might easily, under more favourable circumstances, have grown into an individuality, if not equal to that of Squire Western, at least on a level with Partridge or Colonel Bath. There are numbers of minute touches—as, for example, his mistaking "a lion" for "Elias" when he reads prayers to the ship's company; and his quaint asseverations when exercised by the inconstancy of the wind—which show how closely Fielding studied his deaf companion. But it would occupy too large a space to examine the *Journal* more in detail. It is sufficient to say that after some further delays from wind and tide, the travellers sailed up the Tagus. Here, having undergone the usual quarantine and custom-house obstruction, they landed, and Fielding's penultimate words record a good supper at Lisbon, "for which we were as well charged, as if the bill had been made on the Bath Road, between Newbury and London." The book ends with a line from the poet whom, in the *Proposal for the Poor*, he had called his master:—

"*—hic finis chartæque viæque.*"

Two months afterwards he died at Lisbon, on the 8th of October, in the forty-eighth year of his age.

He was buried on the hillside in the centre of the beautiful English cemetery, which faces the great Basilica of the Heart of Jesus, otherwise known as the Church of the Estrella. Here, in a leafy spot where the nightingales fill the still air with song, and watched by those secular cypresses from which the place takes its Portuguese name of *Os Cyprestes*, lies all that was mortal of

him whom Scott called the "Father of the English Novel." His first tomb, which Wraxall found in 1772, "nearly concealed by weeds and nettles," was erected by the English factory, in consequence mainly—as it seems—of a proposal made by an enthusiastic Chevalier de Meyrionnet, to provide one (with an epitaph) at his own expense. That now existing was substituted in 1830, by the exertions of the Rev. Christopher Neville, British Chaplain at Lisbon. It is a heavy sarcophagus, resting upon a large base, and surmounted by just such another urn and flame as that on Hogarth's Tomb at Chiswick. On the front is a long Latin inscription; on the back the better-known words:—

LUGET BRITANNIA GREMIO NON DARI
FOVERE NATUM.[1]

It is to this last memorial that the late George Borrow referred in his *Bible in Spain*:—

"Let travellers devote one entire morning to inspecting the Arcos and the Mai das agoas, after which they may repair to the English church and cemetery, Père-la-chaise in miniature, where, if they be of England, they may well be excused if they kiss the cold tomb, as I did, of the author of "Amelia," the most singular genius which their island ever produced, whose works it has long been the fashion to abuse in public and to read in secret."

Borrow's book was first published in 1843. Of late years the tomb had been somewhat neglected; but from a communication in the *Athenæum* of May 1879, it appears that it had then been recently cleaned, and

[1] The fifth word is generally given as "datum." But the above version, which has been verified at Lisbon, may be accepted as correct.

the inscriptions restored, by order of the present chaplain, the Rev. Godfrey Pope.

There is but one authentic portrait of Henry Fielding. This is the pen-and-ink sketch drawn from memory by Hogarth, long after Fielding's death, to serve as a frontispiece for Murphy's edition of his works. It was engraved in *facsimile* by James Basire, with such success that the artist is said to have mistaken an impression of the plate (without its emblematic border) for his own drawing. Hogarth's sketch is the sole source of all the portraits, more or less "romanced," which are prefixed to editions of Fielding; and also, there is good reason to suspect, of the dubious little miniature, still in possession of his descendants, which figures in Hutchins's *History of Dorset* and elsewhere. More than one account has been given of the way in which the drawing was produced. The most effective, and, unfortunately, the most popular, version has, of course, been selected by Murphy. In this he tells us that Hogarth, being unable to recall his dead friend's features, had recourse to a profile cut in paper by a lady, who possessed the happy talent which Pope ascribes to Lady Burlington. Her name, which is given in Nichols, was Margaret Collier, and she was possibly the identical Miss Collier who figures in Richardson's *Correspondence*. Setting aside the fact that, as Hogarth's eye-memory was marvellous, this story is highly improbable, it was expressly contradicted by George Steevens in 1781, and by John Ireland in 1798, both of whom, from their relations with Hogarth's family, were likely to be credibly informed. Steevens, after referring to Murphy's fable, says in the *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth*, "I

am assured that our artist began and finished the head in the presence of his wife and another lady. He had no assistance but from his own memory, which, on such occasions, was remarkably tenacious." Ireland, in his *Hogarth Illustrated*, gives us as the simple fact the following:—"Hogarth being told, after his friend's death, that a portrait was wanted as a frontispiece to his works, sketched this from memory." According to the inscription on Basire's plate, it represents Fielding at the age of forty-eight, or in the year of his death. This, however, can only mean that it represents him as Hogarth had last seen him. But long before he died, disease had greatly altered his appearance; and he must have been little more than the shadow of the handsome Harry Fielding, who wrote farces for Mrs. Clive, and heard the chimes at midnight. As he himself says in the *Voyage to Lisbon*, he had lost his teeth, and the consequent falling-in of the lips is plainly perceptible in the profile. The shape of the Roman nose, which Colonel James in *Amelia* irreverently styled a "proboscis," would, however, remain unaltered, and it is still possible to divine a curl, half humorous, half ironic, in the short upper lip. The eye, apparently, was dark and deep-set. Oddly enough, the chin, to the length of which he had himself referred in the *Champion*, does not appear abnormal.[1]

[1] In the bust of Fielding which Miss Margaret Thomas has been commissioned by Mr. R. A. Kinglake to execute for the Somerset Valhalla, the Shire-Hall at Taunton, these points have been carefully considered; and the sculptor has succeeded in producing a work which, while it suggests the mingling of humour and dignity that is Fielding's chief characteristic, is also generally faithful to Hogarth's indications. From these, indeed, it is impossible to deviate. Not only is his portrait unique; but it was admitted

Beyond the fact that he was above six feet in height, and, until the gout had broken his constitution, unusually robust, Murphy adds nothing further to our idea of his personal appearance.

That other picture of his character, traced and retraced (often with much exaggeration of outline), is so familiar in English literature, that it cannot now be materially altered or amended. Yet it is impossible not to wish that it were derived from some less prejudiced or more trustworthy witnesses than those who have spoken,—say, for example, from Lyttelton or Allen. There are always signs that Walpole's malice, and Smollett's animosity, and the rancour of Richardson, have had too much to do with the representation; and even Murphy and Lady Mary are scarcely persons whom one would select as ideal biographers. The latter is probably right in comparing her cousin to Sir Richard Steele. Both were generous, kindly, brave, and sensitive; both were improvident; both loved women and little children; both sinned often, and had their moments of sincere repentance; to both was given that irrepressible hopefulness, and full delight of being which forgets to-morrow in to-day. That Henry Fielding was wild and reckless in his youth it would be idle to contest;—indeed it is an intelligible, if not a necessary, consequence of his physique and his temperament. But it is not fair to speak of him as if his youth lasted for ever. "Critics and biographers," says Mr. Leslie Stephen, "have dwelt far too exclusively upon the uglier side of his Bohemian life;" and Fielding himself, in the *Jacobite's Journal*, complains sadly

to be like Fielding by Fielding's friends. [The bust was placed in the Shire Hall, 4th September 1883.]

that his enemies have traced his impeachment "even to his boyish Years." That he who was prodigal as a lad was prodigal as a man may be conceded; that he who was sanguine at twenty would be sanguine at forty (although this is less defensible) may also be allowed. But, if we press for "better assurance than Bardolph," there is absolutely no good evidence that Fielding's career after his marriage materially differed from that of other men struggling for a livelihood, hampered with ill-health, and exposed to all the shifts and humiliations of necessity. If any portrait of him is to be handed down to posterity, let it be the last rather than the first; —not the Fielding of the green-room and the tavern— of Covent Garden frolics and "modern conversations;" but the energetic magistrate, the tender husband and father, the kindly host of his poorer friends, the practical philanthropist, the patient and magnanimous hero of the *Voyage to Lisbon*. If these things be remembered, it will seem of minor importance that to his dying day he never knew the value of money, or that he forgot his troubles over a chicken and champagne. And even his improvidence was not without its excusable side. Once—so runs the legend—Andrew Millar made him an advance to meet the claims of an importunate tax-gatherer. Carrying it home, he met a friend, in even worse straits than his own; and the money changed hands. When the tax-gatherer arrived there was nothing but the answer—"Friendship has called for the money and had it; let the collector call again." Justice, it is needless to say, was satisfied by a second advance from the bookseller. But who shall condemn the man of whom such a story can be told?

The literary work of Fielding is so inextricably interwoven with what is known of his life that most of it has been examined in the course of the foregoing narrative. What remains to be said is chiefly in summary of what has been said already. As a dramatist he has no eminence; and though his plays do not deserve the sweeping condemnation with which Macaulay once spoke of them in the House of Commons, they are not likely to attract any critics but those for whom the inferior efforts of a great genius possess a morbid fascination. Some of them serve, in a measure, to illustrate his career; others contain hints and situations which he afterwards worked into his novels; but the only ones that possess real stage qualities are those which he borrowed from Regnard and Molière. *Don Quixote in England*, *Pasquin*, the *Historical Register*, can claim no present consideration commensurate with that which they received as contemporary satires, and their interest is mainly antiquarian; while *Tom Thumb* and the *Covent-Garden Tragedy*, the former of which would make the reputation of a smaller man, can scarcely hope to be remembered beside *Amelia* or *Jonathan Wild*. Nor can it be admitted that, as a periodical writer, Fielding was at his best. In spite of effective passages, his essays remain far below the work of the great Augustans, and are not above the level of many of their less illustrious imitators. That instinct of popular selection, which retains a faint hold upon the *Rambler*, the *Adventurer*, the *World*, and the *Connoisseur*, or at least consents to give them honourable interment as "British Essayists" in a secluded corner of the shelves, has made no pretence to any preservation, or even any winnowing, of the *Champion* and the *True Patriot*. Field-

ing's papers are learned and ingenious; they are frequently humorous; they are often earnest; but it must be a loiterer in literature who, in these days, except for antiquarian or biographical purposes, can honestly find it worth while to consult them. His pamphlets and projects are more valuable, if only that they prove him to have looked curiously and sagaciously at social and political problems, and to have striven, as far as in him lay, to set the crooked straight. Their import, to-day, is chiefly that of links in a chain—of contributions to a progressive literature which has travelled into regions unforeseen by the author of the *Proposal for the Poor*, and the *Inquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers*. As such, they have their place in that library of Political Economy of which Mr. M'Culloch has catalogued the riches. It is not, however, by his pamphlets, his essays, or his plays that Fielding is really memorable; it is by his triad of novels, and the surpassing study in irony of *Jonathan Wild*. In *Joseph Andrews* we have the first sprightly runnings of a genius that, after much uncertainty, had at last found its fitting vein, but was yet doubtful and undisciplined: in *Tom Jones* the perfect plan has come, with the perfected method and the assured expression. There is an inevitable loss of that fine waywardness which is sometimes the result of untrained effort, but there is the general gain of order, and the full production which results of art. The highest point is reached in *Tom Jones*, which is the earliest definite and authoritative manifestation of the modern novel. Its relation to De Foe is that of the vertebrate to the invertebrate: to Richardson, that of the real to the ideal—one might almost add, the impossible. It can

be compared to no contemporary English work of its own kind; and if we seek for its parallel at the time of publication we must go beyond literature to art—to the masterpiece of that great pictorial satirist who was Fielding's friend. In both Fielding and Hogarth there is the same constructive power, the same rigid sequence of cause and effect, the same significance of detail, the same side-light of allusion. Both have the same hatred of affectation and hypocrisy—the same unerring insight into character. Both are equally attracted by striking contrasts and comic situations; in both there is the same declared morality of purpose, coupled with the same sturdy virility of expression. One, it is true, leaned more strongly to tragedy, the other to comedy. But if Fielding had painted pictures, it would have been in the style of the *Marriage à la Mode;* if Hogarth had written novels, they would have been in the style of *Tom Jones*. In the gentler and more subdued *Amelia*, with its tender and womanly central-figure, there is a certain change of plan, due to altered conditions—it may be, to an altered philosophy of art. The narrative is less brisk and animated; the character-painting less broadly humorous; the philanthropic element more strongly developed. To trace the influence of these three great works in succeeding writers would hold us too long. It may, nevertheless, be safely asserted that there are few English novels of manners, written since Fielding's day, which do not descend from him as from their fount and source; and that more than one of our modern masters betray unmistakable signs of a form and fashion studied minutely from their frank and manly ancestor.

POSTSCRIPT.

A FEW particulars respecting Fielding's family and posthumous works can scarcely be omitted from the present memoir. It has been stated that by his first wife he had one daughter, the Eleanor Harriot who accompanied him to Lisbon, and survived him, although Mr. Keightley says, but without giving his authority, she did not survive him long. Of his family by Mary Daniel, the eldest son, William, to whose birth reference has already been made, was bred to the law, became a barrister of the Middle Temple eminent as a special pleader, and ultimately a Westminster magistrate. He died in October 1820, at the age of seventy-three. He seems to have shared his father's conversational qualities,[1] and, like him, to have been a strenuous advocate of the poor and unfortunate. Southey, writing from Keswick in 1830 to Sir Egerton Brydges, speaks of a meeting he had in St. James's Park, about 1817, with one of the novelist's sons. "He was then," says Southey, "a fine old man, though visibly shaken by time: he received me in a manner which had much of old courtesy about it, and I looked upon him with great interest for his father's sake." The date, and the fact that William

[1] *Vide* Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, chap. I.

Fielding had had a paralytic stroke, make it almost certain that this was he; and a further reference by Southey to his religious opinions is confirmed by the obituary notice in the *Gentleman's*, which speaks of him as a worthy and pious man. The names and baptisms of the remaining children, as supplied for these pages by the late Colonel Chester, were Mary Amelia, baptized January 6, 1749; Sophia, January 21, 1750; Louisa, December 3, 1752; and Allen, April 6, 1754, about a month before Fielding removed to Ealing. All these baptisms took place at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, from the registers of which these particulars were extracted. The eldest daughter, Mary Amelia, does not appear to have long survived, for the same registers record her burial on the 17th December 1749. Allen Fielding became a clergyman, and died, according to Burke, in 1823, being then vicar of St. Stephen's, Canterbury. He left a family of four sons and three daughters. One of the sons, George, became rector of North Ockendon, Essex, and married, in 1825, Mary Rebecca, daughter of Ferdinand Hanbury-Williams, and grandniece of Fielding's friend and school-fellow Sir Charles. This lady, who so curiously linked the present and the past, died not long since at Hereford Square, Brompton, in her eighty-fifth year. Mrs. Fielding herself (Mary Daniel) appears to have attained a good old age. Her death took place at Canterbury on the 11th of March 1802, perhaps in the house of her son Allen, who is stated by Nichols in his *Leicestershire* to have been rector in 1803 of St. Cosmus and Damian-in-the-Blean. After her husband's death, her children were educated by their uncle John and Ralph Allen, the latter of

whom—says Murphy—made a very liberal annual donation for that purpose; and (adds Chalmers in a note), when he died in 1764, bequeathed to the widow and those of her family then living, the sum of £100 each.

Among Fielding's other connections it is only necessary to speak of his sister Sarah, and his above-mentioned brother John. Sarah Fielding continued to write; and in addition to *David Simple*, published the *Governess*, 1749; a translation of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*; a dramatic fable called the *Cry*, and some other forgotten books. During the latter part of her life she lived at Bath, where she was highly popular, both for her personal character and her accomplishments. She died in 1768; and her friend, Dr. John Hoadly, who wrote the verses to the *Rake's Progress*, erected a monument to her memory in the Abbey Church.

> "Her unaffected Manners, candid Mind,
> Her Heart benevolent, and Soul resign'd;
> Were more her Praise than all she knew or thought
> Though Athens Wisdom to her Sex she taught,"—

says he; but in mere facts the inscription is, as he modestly styles it, a "deficient Memorial," for she is described as having been born in 1714 instead of 1710, and as being the second daughter of General *Henry* instead of General *Edmund* Fielding. John Fielding, the novelist's half-brother, as already stated, succeeded him at Bow Street, though the post is sometimes claimed (on Boswell's authority) for Mr. Welch. The mistake no doubt arose from the circumstance that they frequently worked in concert. Previous to his appointment as a magistrate, John Fielding, in addition to assisting his brother, seems to have been largely

concerned in the promotion of that curious enterprise, the "Universal-Register-Office," so often advertised in the *Covent-Garden Journal*. It appears to have been an Estate Office, Lost Property Office, Servants' Registry, Curiosity Shop, and multifarious General Agency. As a magistrate, in spite of his blindness, John Fielding was remarkably energetic, and is reported to have known more than 3000 thieves by their voices alone, and could recognise them when brought into Court. A description of London and Westminster is often ascribed to him, but he denied the authorship. He was knighted in 1761, and died at Brompton Place in 1780. Lyttelton, who had become Sir George in 1751, was raised to the peerage as Baron Lyttelton of Frankley three years after Fielding's death. He died in 1773. In 1760-5 he published his *Dialogues of the Dead*, profanely characterised by Mr. Walpole as "Dead Dialogues." No. 28 of these is a colloquy between "Plutarch, Charon, and a Modern Bookseller," and it contains the following reference to Fielding: —"We have [says Mr. Bookseller] another writer of these imaginary histories, one who has not long since descended to these regions. His name is Fielding; and his works, as I have heard the best judges say, have a true spirit of comedy, and an exact representation of nature, with fine moral touches. He has not indeed given lessons of pure and consummate virtue, but he has exposed vice and meanness with all the powers of ridicule." It is perhaps excusable that Lawrence, like Roscoe and others, should have attributed this to Lyttelton; but the preface nevertheless assigns it, with two other dialogues, to a "different hand." They were, in fact, the first essays in authorship of that illustrious blue-stocking, Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu.

Fielding's only posthumous works are the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* and the comedy of *The Fathers; or, The Good-Natur'd Man*. The *Journal* was published in February 1755, together with a fragment of a Comment on Bolingbroke's *Essays*, which Mallet had issued in March of the previous year. This fragment must therefore have been begun in the last months of Fielding's life; and, according to Murphy, he made very careful preparation for the work, as attested by long extracts from the Fathers and the leading controversialists, which, after his death, were preserved by his brother. Beyond a passage or two in Richardson's *Correspondence*, and a sneering reference by Walpole to Fielding's "account how his dropsy was treated and teased by an innkeeper's wife in the Isle of Wight," there is nothing to show how the *Journal* was received, still less that it brought any substantial pecuniary relief to "those innocents," to whom reference had been made in the "Dedication." The play was not placed upon the stage until 1778. Its story, which is related in the *Advertisement*, is curious. After it had been set aside in 1742,[1] it seems to have been submitted to Sir Charles Hanbury Williams. Sir Charles was just starting for Russia, as Envoy Extraordinary. Whether the MS. went with him or not is unknown; but it was lost until 1775 or 1776, when it was recovered in a tattered and forlorn condition by Mr. Johnes, M.P. for Cardigan, from a person who entertained a very poor and even contemptuous opinion of its merits. Mr. Johnes thought otherwise. He sent it to Garrick, who at once recognised it as "Harry Fielding's Comedy." Revised and

[1] *Vide* chap. iv. p. 94.

retouched by the actor and Sheridan, it was produced at Drury Lane, as *The Fathers*, with a Prologue and Epilogue by Garrick. For a few nights it was received with interest, and even some flickering enthusiasm. It was then withdrawn; and there is no likelihood that it will ever be revived.

APPENDIX No I.

FIELDING AND SARAH ANDREW.

By the courtesy of the editor of the *Athenæum*, the following letter is here reprinted from that paper for 2d June 1883 :—

75 Eaton Rise, Ealing.

In 1855, when Mr. Frederick Lawrence published his *Life of Henry Fielding*, he thus referred (ch. vii. p. 67) to an "early passage" in the novelist's career: "On his [Fielding's] return from Leyden he conceived a desperate attachment for his cousin, Miss Sarah Andrews [*sic*]. That young lady's friends had, however, so little confidence in her wild kinsman, that they took the precaution of removing her out of his reach; not, it is said, until he had attempted an abduction or elopement. . . . His cousin was afterwards married to a plain country gentleman, and in that alliance found, perhaps, more solid happiness than she would have experienced in an early and improvident marriage with her gifted kinsman. Her image, however, was never effaced from his recollection; and there is a charming picture (so tradition tells) of her luxuriant beauty in the portrait of Sophia Western, in *Tom Jones*." Mr. Lawrence gave no hint or sign of his authority for this unexpected and hitherto unrecorded incident. But the review of his book in the *Athenæum* for 10th November 1855 elicited the following notes on the subject from Mr. George Roberts, some time mayor of Lyme, and author of a brief history of that town. "Henry Fielding," wrote Mr. Roberts, "was at Lyme Regis, Dorset,

for the purpose of carrying off an heiress, Miss Andrew, the daughter of Solomon Andrew, Esq., the last of a series of merchants of that name at Lyme. The young lady was living with Mr. Andrew Tucker, one of the corporation, who sent her away to Modbury, in South Devon, where she married an ancestor of the present Rev. Mr. Rhodes, an eloquent preacher of Bath, who possesses the Andrew property. Mr. Rhodes's son married the young lady upon his return to Modbury from Oxford. The circumstances about the attempts of Henry Fielding to carry off the young lady, handed down in the ancient Tucker family, were doubted by the late head of his family, Dr. Rhodes, of Shapwick, Uplyme, etc. Since his decease I have found an entry in the old archives of Lyme about the fears of Andrew Tucker, Esq., the guardian, as to his safety, owing to the behaviour of Henry Fielding and his attendant, or man. According to the tradition of the Tucker family, given in my *History of Lyme*, Sophia Western was intended to pourtray Miss Andrew." To Mr. Roberts's communication succeeded that of another correspondent—one "P. S."—who gave some additional particulars: "There is now, at Bellair, in the immediate neighbourhood of Exeter the portrait of 'Sophia Western' [Miss Andrew]. Bellair belongs to the Rhodes family, and was the residence of the late George Ambrose Rhodes, Fellow of Caius College, and formerly Physician to the Devon and Exeter Hospital. He himself directed my attention to this picture. In the board-room of the above hospital there is also the three-quarter length portrait of Ralph Allen, Esq., the 'Squire Allworthy' of the same novel." No further contribution appears to have been made to the literature of the subject. The late Mr. Keightley, in his articles on Lawrence's book in *Fraser's Magazine* for January and February 1858, did, as a matter of fact, refer to the story and Mr. Roberts's confirmation of it; but beyond pointing out that Miss Andrew could not have been the original of Sophia Western, who is declared by Fielding himself (*Tom Jones*, bk. xiii. ch. i.) to have been the portrait of his first wife, Charlotte Cradock, he added nothing to the existing information.

When I began to prepare the sketch of Fielding recently included in Mr. John Morley's series of "English Men of Letters," matters stood at this point, and I had little hope that any supplementary details could be obtained. I was, indeed, fortunate enough to discover that Burke's *Landed Gentry* for 1858 gave the year of Miss Andrew's marriage as 1726; and inquiries at Modbury, though they did not actually confirm this, practically did so, by disclosing the fact that a child of Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose Rhodes was baptized at that place in April 1727. It became clear, therefore, that instead of being subsequent to Fielding's "return from Leyden" in 1728, as Lawrence supposed, the date of the reported attempt at elopement could not have been later than 1725 or the early part of 1726—so far back, in fact, in Fielding's life that I confess to having entertained a private doubt whether it ever occurred at all. That doubt has now been completely removed by the appearance of some new and wholly unlooked-for evidence.

After the publication in 1858 of his *Fraser* papers, Mr. Keightley seems to have continued his researches with the intention of writing a final biography of Fielding. In this, which was to include a reprint of the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* and a critical examination of Fielding's works, he made considerable progress; and by the courtesy of his nephew, Mr. Alfred C. Lyster, his MSS. have been placed at my disposal. Much that relates to Fielding's life has manifestly the disadvantage of having been written more than twenty years ago, and it reproduces some aspects of Fielding which have now been abandoned; but in the elucidation and expansion of the Sarah Andrew episode Mr. Keightley leaves little to be desired. His first step, apparently, was to communicate with Mr. Roberts, who furnished him (6th May 1859) with the following transcript or summary of the original record in the *Register Book* of Lyme Regis:—

"John Bowdidge, Jun., was Mayor when Andrew Tucker, Gent., one of the corporation, caused Henry Fielding, Gent., and his servant or companion, Joseph Lewis—both now and for some time past residing in the borough—to be bound over to keep the peace, as he was in fear of his life or some

bodily hurt to be done or to be procured to be done to him by H. Fielding and his man. Mr. A. Tucker feared that the man would beat, maim, or kill him. 14th November 1725."

We thus get the exact date of the occurrence, 14th November 1725 (*i.e.* when Fielding was eighteen), the fact that he had been staying for some time in Lyme at that date, and the name of his servant. In a further letter of 14th May 1859, Mr. Roberts referred Mr. Keightley to Mr. James Davidson, a Devon antiquary, in whose *History of Newenham Abbey*, Longmans, 1843 (surely a most out-of-the-way source of information !), he found the following, derived by the author from the Rhodes family (pp. 165, 166) :—

"The estate [of Shapwick, near Axminster] continued but a short time the property of the noble family of Petre, being sold by William the fourth baron, on the 10th of November 1670, to Solomon Andrew of Lyme Regis, a gentleman, who possessed a considerable property obtained by his ancestors and himself in mercantile affairs. From him it descended to his only son, who died at the age of twenty-nine years, leaving two sons and a daughter, the latter of whom, by the decease of her brothers, became heiress to the estate. This young lady was placed under the guardianship of Mr. Rhodes of Modbury, and her uncle, Mr. Tucker of Lyme, in whose family she resided. At this time Henry Fielding, whose very objectionable but once popular works have placed his name high on the list of novel-writers, was an occasional visitor at the place, and enraptured with the charms and the more solid attractions of Miss Andrew, paid her the most assiduous attention. The views of her guardians were, however, opposed to a connection with so dissipated, though well-born and well-educated a youth, who is said to have in consequence made a desperate attempt to carry the lady off by force on a Sunday, when she was on her way to church. The residence of the heiress was then removed to Modbury, and the disappointed admirer found consolation in the society of a beauty at Salisbury whom he married."

There are some manifest misconceptions in this account, due, no doubt, to Mr. Davidson's ignorance of the exact

period of the occurrence as established by the above record in the Lyme archives. In the first place, it must have been four or five years at least before Fielding consoled himself with Miss Charlotte Cradock, and nearly ten (according to the received date) before he married her. Again, in saying that he was "dissipated," Mr. Davidson must have been thinking of his conventional after-character, for in 1725 he was but a boy fresh from Eton, and could scarcely have established any reputation as a rake. Nor is there anything in our whole knowledge of him to justify us in supposing that he was at any time a mere mercenary fortune-hunter. Finally, according to one of Mr. Roberts's letters to Mr. Keightley, timorous Mr. Tucker of Lyme had a very different reason from his personal shortcomings for objecting to Fielding as a suitor to his ward. "The Tucker family," says Mr. Roberts, "by tradition consider themselves tricked out of the heiress, Miss Andrew, by Mr. Rhodes of Modbury, Mr. Andrew Tucker intending the lady for his own son." Nevertheless, these reservations made, Mr. Davidson's version, although *ex parte*, supplies colour and detail to the story. From a pedigree which he gives in his book, it further appears that Mrs. Rhodes died on the 22d of August 1783, aged seventy-three. This would make her fifteen in 1725. There remained Lawrence's enigmatical declaration that she was Fielding's cousin. Briefly stated, the result of Mr. Keightley's inquiries in this direction tends to show that Miss Andrew's mother was connected with the family of Fielding's mother, the Goulds of Sharpham Park; and as Mr. Lawrence does not seem to have been aware of the existence of Davidson's book, or to have had any acquaintance with the traditions or archives of Lyme, Mr. Keightley surmises, very plausibly, that his unvouched data must have been derived, directly or indirectly, from the Rhodes family.

Mr. Keightley also ingeniously attempts to connect Fielding's subsequent residence at Leyden (1726-28 ?[1]) with

[1] See Peacock's *Index to English-speaking Students who have graduated at Leyden University*, 1883 (p. 35), where Fielding's name occurs under date of 16th March 1728, and *Cornhill Magazine* for November 1863—"A Scotchman in Holland."

this affair by assuming that he was despatched to the Dutch university, instead of Oxford or Cambridge, in order to keep him out of harm's way. This is, however, to travel somewhat from the realm of fact into that of romance. At the same time, it must be admitted that the materials for romance are tempting. A charming girl, who is also an heiress; a pusillanimous guardian with ulterior views of his own; a handsome and high-spirited young suitor; a faithful attendant ready to "beat, maim, or kill" in his master's behalf; a frustrated elopement and a compulsory visit to the mayor—all these, with the picturesque old town of Lyme for a background, suggest a most appropriate first act to Harry Fielding's biographical tragi-comedy. But to do such a theme justice we must

"call up him that left half-told"

the story of *Denis Duval*.

APPENDIX No. II.

FIELDING AND MRS. HUSSEY.

At pp. 124-5, vol. i., of J. T. Smith's *Nollekens and his Times*, 1828, occurs the following note:—

"Henry Fielding was fond of colouring his pictures of life with the glowing and variegated tints of Nature, by conversing with persons of every situation and calling, as I have frequently been informed by one of my [*i.e.* J. T. Smith's] great-aunts, the late Mrs. Hussey, who knew him intimately. I have heard her say, that Mr. Fielding never suffered his talent for sprightly conversation to mildew for a moment; and that his manners were so gentlemanly, that even with the lower classes, with which he frequently condescended particularly to chat, such as Sir Roger de Coverley's old friends, the Vauxhall watermen, they seldom outstepped the limits of propriety. My aunt, who lived to the age of 105,

had been blessed with four husbands, and her name had twice been changed to that of Hussey: she was of a most delightful disposition, of a retentive memory, highly entertaining, and liberally communicative; and to her I have frequently been obliged for an interesting anecdote. She was, after the death of her second husband, Mr. Hussey, a fashionable sacque and mantua-maker, and lived in the Strand, a few doors west of the residence of the celebrated Le Beck, a famous cook, who had a large portrait of himself for the sign of his house, at the north-west corner of Half-moon Street, since called Little Bedford Street. One day Mr. Fielding observed to Mrs. Hussey, that he was then engaged in writing a novel, which he thought would be his best production; and that he intended to introduce in it the characters of all his friends. Mrs. Hussey, with a smile, ventured to remark, that he must have many niches, and that surely they must already be filled. 'I assure you, my dear madam,' replied he, 'there shall be a bracket for a bust of you.' Some time after this, he informed Mrs. Hussey that the work was in the press; but, immediately recollecting that he had forgotten his promise to her, went to the printer, and was time enough to insert, in vol. iii. p. 17 [bk. x. ch. iv.], where he speaks of the shape of Sophia Western—'Such charms are there in affability, and so sure is it to attract the praises of all kinds of people.'—'It may, indeed, be compared to the celebrated Mrs. Hussey.' To which observation he has given the following note: 'A celebrated mantua-maker in the Strand, famous for setting off the shapes of women.'"

There is no reason for supposing that this neglected anecdote should not be in all respects authentic. In fact, upon the venerated principle that

> "there it stands unto this day
> To witness if I lie,"—

the existence of the passage and note in *Tom Jones* is practically sufficient argument for its veracity. This being so, it surely deserves some consideration for the light which it throws on Fielding's character. Mrs. Hussey's testimony as to his dignified and gentlemanly manners, which does not

seem to be advanced to meet any particular charge, may surely be set against any innuendoes of the Burney and Walpole type as to his mean environment and coarse conversation. And the suggestion that "the characters of all his friends"—by which must be intended rather mention of them than portraits—are to be found in his masterpiece, is fairly borne out by the most casual inspection of *Tom Jones*, especially the first edition, where all the proper names are in italics. In the dedication alone are references to the "princely Benefactions" of John, Duke of Bedford, and to Lyttelton and Ralph Allen, both of whom are also mentioned by name in bk. xiii. ch. i. The names of Hogarth and Garrick also occur frequently. In bk. iv. ch. i. is an anecdote of Wilks the player, who had been one of Fielding's earliest patrons. The surgeon in the story of the "Man of the Hill" (bk. viii. ch. xiii.) "whose Name began with an *R*," and who "was Sergeant-Surgeon to the King," evidently stands for Hogarth's Chiswick neighbour, Mr. Ranby, by whose advice Fielding was ordered to Bath in 1753. Again, he knew, though he did not greatly admire, Warburton, to whose learning there is a handsome compliment in bk. xiii. ch. i. In bk. xv. ch. iv. is the name of another friend or acquaintance (also mentioned in the *Journey from this World to the Next*), Hooke, of the *Roman History*, who, like the author of *Tom Jones*, had drawn his pen for Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. Bk. xi. ch. iv. contains an anecdote, real or imaginary, of Richard Nash, with whom Fielding must certainly have become familiar in his visits to Bath; and it is probable that Square's medical advisers (bk. xviii. ch. iv.), Dr. Harrington and Dr. Brewster, both of whom subscribed to the *Miscellanies* of 1743, were well-known Bathonians. Mr. Willoughby, also a subscriber, was probably "Justice Willoughby of Noyle" referred to in bk. viii. ch. xi. Whether the use of Handel's name in bk. iv. ch. v. is of any significance there is no evidence; but the description in bk. iv. ch. vi. of Conscience "sitting on its Throne in the Mind, like the Lord High Chancellor of this Kingdom in his Court," and fulfilling its functions "with a Knowledge which nothing escapes, a Penetration which nothing can deceive, and an

Integrity which nothing can corrupt," is clearly an oblique panegyric of Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke, to whom, two years later, Fielding dedicated his *Enquiry into the late Increase of Robbers*, etc. Besides these, there are references to Bishop Hoadly (bk. ii. ch. vii.), Mrs. Whitefield, of the "Bell" at Gloucester, and Mr. Timothy Harris (bk. viii. ch. viii.), Mrs. Clive and Mr. Miller of the *Gardener's Dictionary* (bk. ix. ch. i.); and closer examination would no doubt reveal further allusions. Meanwhile the above will be sufficient to show that the statement of the "celebrated mantua-maker in the Strand" respecting Fielding's friends in *Tom Jones* is not without foundation.

APPENDIX No. III.

AMELIA'S ACCIDENT.

In addition to the alterations mentioned at p. 109 *n.*, Fielding inserted the following paragraph in the *Covent Garden Journal*, No. 3, for 11th January 1762:—

"It is currently reported that a famous Surgeon, who absolutely cured one Mrs. Amelia Booth, of a violent Hurt in her Nose, insomuch, that she had scarce a Scar left on it, intends to bring Actions against several ill-meaning and slanderous People, who have reported that the said Lady had no Nose, merely because the Author of her History, in a Hurry, forgot to inform his Readers of that Particular, and which, if those Readers had any Nose themselves, except that which is mentioned in the Motto of this Paper, they would have smelt out."

The motto is the passage from Martial in which he speaks of the *nasus rhinocerotis*.

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THACKERAY.

CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

In the foregoing volumes of this series of *English Men of Letters*, and in other works of a similar nature which have appeared lately as to the *Ancient Classics* and *Foreign Classics*, biography has naturally been, if not the leading, at any rate a considerable element. The desire is common to all readers to know not only what a great writer has written, but also of what nature has been the man who has produced such great work. As to all the authors taken in hand before, there has been extant some written record of the man's life. Biographical details have been more or less known to the world, so that, whether of a Cicero, or of a Goethe, or of our own Johnson, there has been a story to tell. Of Thackeray no life has been written; and though they who knew him,—and possibly many who did not,—are conversant with anecdotes of the man, who was one so well known in society as to have created many anecdotes, yet there has been no memoir of his life sufficient to supply the wants of even so small a work as this purports to be.

For this the reason may simply be told. Thackeray, not long before his death, had had his taste offended by some fulsome biography. Paragraphs, of which the eulogy seemed to have been the produce rather of personal love than of inquiry or judgment, disgusted him, and he begged of his girls that when he should have gone there should nothing of the sort be done with his name.

We can imagine how his mind had worked, how he had declared to himself that, as by those loving hands into which his letters, his notes, his little details,—his literary remains, as such documents used to be called,—might naturally fall, truth of his foibles and of his shortcomings could not be told, so should not his praises be written, or that flattering portrait be limned which biographers are wont to produce. Acting upon these instructions, his daughters,—while there were two living, and since that the one surviving,—have carried out the order which has appeared to them to be sacred. Such being the case, it certainly is not my purpose now to write what may be called a life of Thackeray. In this preliminary chapter I will give such incidents and anecdotes of his life as will tell the reader perhaps all about him that a reader is entitled to ask. I will tell how he became an author, and will say how first he worked and struggled, and then how he worked and prospered, and became a household word in English literature;—how, in this way, he passed through that course of mingled failure and success which, though the literary aspirant may suffer, is probably better both for the writer and for the writings than unclouded early glory. The suffering no doubt is acute, and a touch of melancholy, perhaps of indignation, may be given to words which have been

written while the heart has been too full of its own wrongs; but this is better than the continued note of triumph which is still heard in the final voices of the spoilt child of literature, even when they are losing their music. Then I will tell how Thackeray died, early indeed, but still having done a good life's work. Something of his manner, something of his appearance I can say, something perhaps of his condition of mind; because for some few years he was known to me. But of the continual intercourse of himself with the world, and of himself with his own works, I can tell little, because no record of his life has been made public.

William Makepeace Thackeray was born at Calcutta, on July 18, 1811. His father was Richmond Thackeray, son of W. M. Thackeray of Hadley, near Barnet, in Middlesex. A relation of his, of the same name, a Rev. Mr. Thackeray, I knew well as rector of Hadley, many years afterwards. Him I believe to have been a second cousin of our Thackeray, but I think they had never met each other. Another cousin was Provost of Kings at Cambridge, fifty years ago, as Cambridge men will remember. Clergymen of the family have been numerous in England during the century, and there was one, a Rev. Elias Thackeray, whom I also knew in my youth, a dignitary, if I remember right, in the diocese of Meath. The Thackerays seem to have affected the Church; but such was not at any period of his life the bias of our novelist's mind.

His father and grandfather were Indian civil servants. His mother was Anne Becher, whose father was also in the Company's service. She married early in India, and was only nineteen when her son was born. She was left

a widow in 1816, with only one child, and was married a few years afterwards to Major Henry Carmichael Smyth, with whom Thackeray lived on terms of affectionate intercourse till the major died. All who knew William Makepeace remember his mother well, a handsome, spare, gray-haired lady, whom Thackeray treated with a courtly deference as well as constant affection. There was, however, something of discrepancy between them as to matters of religion. Mrs. Carmichael Smyth was disposed to the somewhat austere observance of the evangelical section of the Church. Such, certainly, never became the case with her son. There was disagreement on the subject, and probably unhappiness at intervals, but never, I think, quarrelling. Thackeray's house was his mother's home whenever she pleased it, and the home also of his stepfather.

He was brought a child from India, and was sent early to the Charter House. Of his life and doings there his friend and schoolfellow George Venables writes to me as follows;

"My recollection of him, though fresh enough, does not furnish much material for biography. He came to school young,—a pretty, gentle, and rather timid boy. I think his experience there was not generally pleasant. Though he had afterwards a scholarlike knowledge of Latin, he did not attain distinction in the school; and I should think that the character of the head-master, Dr. Russell, which was vigorous, unsympathetic, and stern, though not severe, was uncongenial to his own. With the boys who knew him, Thackeray was popular; but he had no skill in games, and, I think, no taste for them . . . . He was already known by his faculty of making verses,

chiefly parodies. I only remember one line of one parody on a poem of L. E. L.'s, about 'Violets, dark blue violets;' Thackeray's version was 'Cabbages, bright green cabbages,' and we thought it very witty. He took part in a scheme, which came to nothing, for a school magazine, and he wrote verses for it, of which I only remember that they were good of their kind. When I knew him better, in later years, I thought I could recognise the sensitive nature which he had as a boy . . . . His change of retrospective feeling about his school days was very characteristic. In his earlier books he always spoke of the Charter House as Slaughter House and Smithfield. As he became famous and prosperous his memory softened, and Slaughter House was changed into Grey Friars where Colonel Newcome ended his life."

In February, 1829, when he was not as yet eighteen, Thackeray went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, and was, I think, removed in 1830. It may be presumed, therefore, that his studies there were not very serviceable to him. There are few, if any, records left of his doings at the university,—unless it be the fact that he did there commence the literary work of his life. The line about the cabbages, and the scheme of the school magazine, can hardly be said to have amounted even to a commencement. In 1829 a little periodical was brought out at Cambridge, called *The Snob*, with an assurance on the title that it was *not* conducted by members of the university. It is presumed that Thackeray took a hand in editing this. He certainly wrote, and published in the little paper, some burlesque lines on the subject which was given for the Chancellor's prize poem of the year. This was *Timbuctoo*, and Tennyson was the victor on the occasion.

There is some good fun in the four first and four last lines of Thackeray's production.

> In Africa,—a quarter of the world,—
> Men's skins are black; their hair is crisped and curled;
> And somewhere there, unknown to public view
> A mighty city lies, called Timbuctoo.
>
> * * *
>
> I see her tribes the hill of glory mount,
> And sell their sugars on their own account;
> While round her throne the prostrate nations come,
> Sue for her rice, and barter for her rum.

I cannot find in *The Snob* internal evidence of much literary merit beyond this. But then how many great writers have there been from whose early lucubrations no future literary excellence could be prognosticated?

There is something at any rate in the name of the publication which tells of work that did come. Thackeray's mind was at all times peculiarly exercised with a sense of snobbishness. His appreciation of the vice grew abnormally, so that at last he had a morbid horror of a snob —a morbid fear lest this or the other man should turn snob on his hands. It is probable that the idea was taken from the early *Snob* at Cambridge, either from his own participation in the work or from his remembrance of it. *The Snob* lived, I think, but nine weeks, and was followed at an interval, in 1830, by *The Gownsman*, which lived to the seventeenth number, and at the opening of which Thackeray no doubt had a hand. It professed to be a continuation of *The Snob*. It contains a dedication to all proctors, which I should not be sorry to attribute to him. "To all Proctors, past, present, and future—

> Whose taste it is our privilege to follow,
> Whose virtue it is our duty to imitate,
> Whose presence it is our interest to avoid."

There is, however, nothing beyond fancy to induce me to

believe that Thackeray was the author of the dedication, and I do not know that there is any evidence to show that he was connected with *The Snob* beyond the writing of *Timbuctoo*.

In 1830 he left Cambridge, and went to Weimar either in that year or in 1831. Between Weimar and Paris he spent some portion of his earlier years, while his family, —his mother, that is, and his stepfather,—were living in Devonshire. It was then the purport of his life to become an artist, and he studied drawing at Paris, affecting especially Bonnington, the young English artist who had himself painted at Paris and who had died in 1828. He never learned to draw,—perhaps never could have learned. That he was idle, and did not do his best, we may take for granted. He was always idle, and only on some occasions, when the spirit moved him thoroughly, did he do his best even in after life. But with drawing, —or rather without it,—he did wonderfully well even when he did his worst. He did illustrate his own books, and everyone knows how incorrect were his delineations. But as illustrations they were excellent. How often have I wished that characters of my own creating might be sketched as faultily, if with the same appreciation of the intended purpose. Let anyone look at the "plates," as they are called in *Vanity Fair*, and compare each with the scenes and the characters intended to be displayed, and there see whether the artist, —if we may call him so,—has not managed to convey in the picture the exact feeling which he has described in the text. I have a little sketch of his, in which a cannon-ball is supposed to have just carried off the head of an aide-de-camp,—messenger I had perhaps better say, lest I might affront military feelings,—who is kneeling on the field of battle and delivering a despatch to Marlborough

on horseback. The graceful ease with which the duke receives the message though the messenger's head be gone, and the soldier-like precision with which the headless hero finishes his last effort of military obedience, may not have been portrayed with well-drawn figures, but no finished illustration ever told its story better. Dickens has informed us that he first met Thackeray in 1835, on which occasion the young artist aspirant, looking no doubt after profitable employment, "proposed to become the illustrator of my earliest book." It is singular that such should have been the first interview between the two great novelists. We may presume that the offer was rejected.

In 1832, Thackeray came of age, and inherited his fortune,—as to which various stories have been told. It seems to have amounted to about five hundred a year, and to have passed through his hands in a year or two, interest and principal. It has been told of him that it was all taken away from him at cards, but such was not the truth. Some went in an Indian bank in which he invested it. A portion was lost at cards. But with some of it,—the larger part as I think,—he endeavoured, in concert with his stepfather, to float a newspaper, which failed. There seem to have been two newspapers in which he was so concerned, *The National Standard* and *The Constitutional*. On the latter he was engaged with his stepfather, and in carrying that on he lost the last of his money. *The National Standard* had been running for some weeks when Thackeray joined it, and lost his money in it. It ran only for little more than twelve months, and then, the money having gone, the periodical came to an end. I know no road to fortune more tempting to a young man, or one that with more certainty leads to ruin. Thackeray, who in a way more or

less correct, often refers in his writings, if not to the incidents, at any rate to the remembrances of his own life, tells us much of the story of this newspaper in *Lovel the Widower*. "They are welcome," says the bachelor, "to make merry at my charges in respect of a certain bargain which I made on coming to London, and in which, had I been Moses Primrose purchasing green spectacles, I could scarcely have been more taken in. My Jenkinson was an old college acquaintance, whom I was idiot enough to imagine a respectable man. The fellow had a very smooth tongue and sleek sanctified exterior. He was rather a popular preacher, and used to cry a good deal in the pulpit. He and a queer wine merchant and bill discounter, Sherrick by name, had somehow got possession of that neat little literary paper, *The Museum*, which perhaps you remember, and this eligible literary property my friend Honeyman, with his wheedling tongue, induced me to purchase." Here is the history of Thackeray's money, told by himself plainly enough, but with no intention on his part of narrating an incident in his own life to the public. But the drollery of the circumstances, his own mingled folly and young ambition, struck him as being worth narration, and the more forcibly as he remembered all the ins and outs of his own reflections at the time,—how he had meant to enchant the world, and make his fortune. There was literary capital in it of which he could make use after so many years. Then he tells us of this ambition, and of the folly of it; and at the same time puts forward the excuses to be made for it. "I daresay I gave myself airs as editor of that confounded *Museum*, and proposed to educate the public taste, to diffuse morality and sound literature throughout the nation, and to pocket a liberal salary in return for my services. I daresay I printed my own sonnets, my own

tragedy, my own verses . . . . I daresay I wrote satirical articles . . . . I daresay I made a gaby of myself to the world. Pray, my good friend, hast thou never done likewise? If thou hast never been a fool, be sure thou wilt never be a wise man." Thackeray was quite aware of his early weaknesses, and in the maturity of life knew well that he had not been precociously wise. He delighted so to tell his friends, and he delighted also to tell the public, not meaning that any but an inner circle should know that he was speaking of himself. But the story now is plain to all who can read.[1]

It was thus that he lost his money; and then, not having prospered very well with his drawing lessons in Paris or elsewhere, he was fain to take up literature as a profession. It is a business which has its allurements. It requires no capital, no special education, no training, and may be taken up at any time without a moment's delay. If a man can command a table, a chair, pen, paper, and ink, he can commence his trade as literary man. It is thus that aspirants generally do commence it. A man may or may not have another employment to back him, or means of his own; or,—as was the case with Thackeray, when, after his first misadventure, he had to look about him for the means of living,—he may have nothing but his intellect and his friends. But the idea comes to the man that as he has the pen and ink,

[1] The report that he had lost all his money and was going to live by painting in Paris, was still prevalent in London in 1836. Macready, on the 27th April of that year, says in his *Diary*; "At Garrick Club, where I dined and saw the papers. Met Thackeray, who has spent all his fortune, and is now about to settle in Paris, I believe as an artist." But at this time he was, in truth, turning to literature as a profession.

and time on his hand, why should he not write and make money?

It is an idea that comes to very many men and women, old as well as young,—to many thousands who at last are crushed by it, of whom the world knows nothing. A man can make the attempt though he has not a coat fit to go out into the street with; or a woman, though she be almost in rags. There is no apprenticeship wanted. Indeed there is no room for such apprenticeship. It is an art which no one teaches; there is no professor who, in a dozen lessons, even pretends to show the aspirant how to write a book or an article. If you would be a watchmaker, you must learn; or a lawyer, a cook, or even a housemaid. Before you can clean a horse you must go into the stable, and begin at the beginning. Even the cab-driving tiro must sit for awhile on the box, and learn something of the streets, before he can ply for a fare. But the literary beginner rushes at once at the top rung of his ladder;—as though a youth, having made up his mind to be a clergyman, should demand, without preliminary steps, to be appointed Bishop of London. That he should be able to read and write is presumed, and that only. So much may be presumed of everyone, and nothing more is wanted.

In truth nothing more is wanted,—except those inner lights as to which so many men live and die without having learned whether they possess them or not. Practice, industry, study of literature, cultivation of taste, and the rest, will of course lend their aid, will probably be necessary before high excellence is attained. But the instances are not to seek,—are at the fingers of us all,—in which the first uninstructed effort has succeeded. A boy, almost, or perhaps an old woman, has sat down

and the book has come, and the world has read it, and the booksellers have been civil and have written their cheques. When all trades, all professions, all seats at offices, all employments at which a crust can be earned, are so crowded that a young man knows not where to look for the means of livelihood, is there not an attraction in this which to the self-confident must be almost invincible? The booksellers are courteous and write their cheques, but that is not half the whole? *Monstrari digito!* That is obtained. The happy aspirant is written of in newspapers, or, perhaps, better still, he writes of others. When the barrister of forty-five has hardly got a name beyond Chancery Lane, this glorious young scribe, with the first down on his lips, has printed his novel and been talked about.

The temptation is irresistible, and thousands fall into it. How is a man to know that he is not the lucky one or the gifted one? There is the table and there the pen and ink. Among the unfortunate he who fails altogether and from the first start is not the most unfortunate. A short period of life is wasted, and a sharp pang is endured. Then the disappointed one is relegated to the condition of life which he would otherwise have filled a little earlier. He has been wounded, but not killed, or even maimed. But he who has a little success, who succeeds in earning a few halcyon, but, ah! so dangerous guineas, is drawn into a trade from which he will hardly escape till he be driven from it, if he come out alive, by sheer hunger. He hangs on till the guineas become crowns and shillings, —till some sad record of his life, made when he applies for charity, declares that he has worked hard for the last year or two and has earned less than a policeman in the streets or a porter at a railway. It is to that that he is

brought by applying himself to a business which requires only a table and chair, with pen, ink, and paper! It is to that which he is brought by venturing to believe that he has been gifted with powers of imagination, creation, and expression.

The young man who makes the attempt knows that he must run the chance. He is well aware that nine must fail where one will make his running good. So much as that does reach his ears, and recommends itself to his common sense. But why should it not be he as well as another? There is always some lucky one winning the prize. And this prize when it has been won is so well worth the winning! He can endure starvation,—so he tells himself,—as well as another. He will try. But yet he knows that he has but one chance out of ten in his favour, and it is only in his happier moments that he flatters himself that that remains to him. Then there falls upon him,—in the midst of that labour which for its success especially requires that a man's heart shall be light, and that he be always at his best,—doubt and despair. If there be no chance, of what use is his labour?

> Were it not better done as others use,
> To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,

and amuse himself after that fashion? Thus the very industry which alone could give him a chance is discarded. It is so that the young man feels who, with some slight belief in himself and with many doubts, sits down to commence the literary labour by which he hopes to live.

So it was, no doubt, with Thackeray. Such were his hopes and his fears;—with a resolution of which we can well understand that it should have waned at times, of earning his bread, if he did not make his fortune, in the

world of literature. One has not to look far for evidence of the condition I have described,—that it was so, Amaryllis and all. How or when he made his very first attempt in London, I have not learned; but he had not probably spent his money without forming "press" acquaintances, and had thus found an aperture for the thin end of the wedge. He wrote for *The Constitutional*, of which he was part proprietor, beginning his work for that paper as a correspondent from Paris. For a while he was connected with *The Times* newspaper, though his work there did not I think amount to much. His first regular employment was on *Fraser's Magazine*, when Mr. Fraser's shop was in Regent Street, when Oliver Yorke was the presumed editor, and among contributors, Carlyle was one of the most notable. I imagine that the battle of life was difficult enough with him even after he had become one of the leading props of that magazine. All that he wrote was not taken, and all that was taken was not approved. In 1837–38, the *History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond* appeared in the magazine. The *Great Hoggarty Diamond* is now known to all readers of Thackeray's works. It is not my purpose to speak specially of it here, except to assert that it has been thought to be a great success. When it was being brought out, the author told a friend of his,—and of mine,—that it was not much thought of at Fraser's, and that he had been called upon to shorten it. That is an incident disagreeable in its nature to any literary gentleman, and likely to be specially so when he knows that his provision of bread, certainly of improved bread and butter, is at stake. The man who thus darkens his literary brow with the frown of disapproval, has at his disposal all the loaves and all the fishes that are going. If the writer be suc-

cessful, there will come a time when he will be above such frowns; but, when that opinion went forth, Thackeray had not yet made his footing good, and the notice to him respecting it must have been very bitter. It was in writing this *Hoggarty Diamond* that Thackeray first invented the name of Michael Angelo Titmarsh. Samuel Titmarsh was the writer, whereas Michael Angelo was an intending illustrator. Thackeray's nose had been broken in a school fight, while he was quite a little boy, by another little boy, at the Charter House; and there was probably some association intended to be jocose with the name of the great artist, whose nose was broken by his fellow-student Torrigiano, and who, as it happened, died exactly three centuries before Thackeray.

I can understand all the disquietude of his heart when that warning, as to the too great length of his story, was given to him. He was not a man capable of feeling at any time quite assured in his position, and when that occurred he was very far from assurance. I think that at no time did he doubt the sufficiency of his own mental qualification for the work he had taken in hand; but he doubted all else. He doubted the appreciation of the world; he doubted his fitness for turning his intellect to valuable account; he doubted his physical capacity,—dreading his own lack of industry; he doubted his luck; he doubted the continual absence of some of those misfortunes on which the works of literary men are shipwrecked. Though he was aware of his own power, he always, to the last, was afraid that his own deficiencies should be too strong against him. It was his nature to be idle,—to put off his work,—and then to be angry with himself for putting it off. Ginger was hot in the mouth with him, and all the allurements of the world were strong

upon him. To find on Monday morning an excuse why he should not on Monday do Monday's work was, at the time, an inexpressible relief to him, but had become a deep regret,—almost a remorse,—before the Monday was over. To such a one it was not given to believe in himself with that sturdy rock-bound foundation which we see to have belonged to some men from the earliest struggles of their career. To him, then, must have come an inexpressible pang when he was told that his story must be curtailed.

Who else would have told such a story of himself to the first acquaintance he chanced to meet? Of Thackeray it might be predicted that he certainly would do so. No little wound of the kind ever came to him but what he disclosed it at once. "They have only bought so many of my new book." "Have you seen the abuse of my last number?" "What am I to turn my hand to? They are getting tired of my novels." "They don't read it," he said to me of *Esmond*. "So you don't mean to publish my work?" he said once to a publisher in an open company. Other men keep their little troubles to themselves. I have heard even of authors who have declared how all the publishers were running after their books; I have heard some discourse freely of their fourth and fifth editions; I have known an author to boast of his thousands sold in this country, and his tens of thousands in America; but I never heard anyone else declare that no one would read his *chef-d'œuvre*, and that the world was becoming tired of him. It was he who said, when he was fifty, that a man past fifty should never write a novel.

And yet, as I have said, he was from an early age fully conscious of his own ability. That he was so is to be

seen in the handling of many of his early works,—in *Barry Lyndon*, for instance, and the *Memoirs of Mr. C. James Yellowplush*. The sound is too certain for doubt of that kind. But he had not then, nor did he ever achieve that assurance of public favour which makes a man confident that his work will be successful. During the years of which we are now speaking Thackeray was a literary Bohemian in this sense,—that he never regarded his own status as certain. While performing much of the best of his life's work he was not sure of his market, not certain of his readers, his publishers, or his price; nor was he certain of himself.

It is impossible not to form some contrast between him and Dickens as to this period of his life,—a comparison not as to their literary merits, but literary position. Dickens was one year his junior in age, and at this time, viz. 1837–38, had reached almost the zenith of his reputation. *Pickwick* had been published, and *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* were being published. All the world was talking about the young author who was assuming his position with a confidence in his own powers which was fully justified both by his present and future success. It was manifest that he could make, not only his own fortune, but that of his publishers, and that he was a literary hero bound to be worshipped by all literary grades of men, down to the "devils" of the printing-office. At that time, Thackeray, the older man, was still doubting, still hesitating, still struggling. Everyone then had accepted the name of Charles Dickens. That of William Thackeray was hardly known beyond the circle of those who are careful to make themselves acquainted with such matters. It was then the custom, more generally than it is at present, to

maintain anonymous writing in magazines. Now, if anything of special merit be brought out, the name of the author, if not published, is known. It was much less so at the period in question; and as the world of readers began to be acquainted with Jeames Yellowplush, Catherine Hayes, and other heroes and heroines, the names of the author had to be inquired for. I remember myself, when I was already well acquainted with the immortal Jeames, asking who was the writer. The works of Charles Dickens were at that time as well known to be his, and as widely read in England, as those almost of Shakespeare.

It will be said of course that this came from the earlier popularity of Dickens. That is of course; but why should it have been so? They had begun to make their effort much at the same time; and if there was any advantage in point of position as they commenced, it was with Thackeray. It might be said that the genius of the one was brighter than that of the other, or, at any rate, that it was more precocious. But after-judgment has, I think, not declared either of the suggestions to be true. I will make no comparison between two such rivals, who were so distinctly different from each, and each of whom, within so very short a period, has come to stand on a pedestal so high,—the two exalted to so equal a vocation. And if Dickens showed the best of his power early in life, so did Thackeray the best of his intellect. In no display of mental force did he rise above *Barry Lyndon*. I hardly know how the teller of a narrative shall hope to mount in simply intellectual faculty above the effort there made. In what then was the difference? Why was Dickens already a great man when Thackeray was still a literary Bohemian?

The answer is to be found not in the extent or in the nature of the genius of either man, but in the condition of mind,—which indeed may be read plainly in their works by those who have eyes to see. The one was steadfast, industrious, full of purpose, never doubting of himself, always putting his best foot foremost and standing firmly on it when he got it there; with no inward trepidation, with no moments in which he was half inclined to think that this race was not for his winning, this goal not to be reached by his struggles. The sympathy of friends was good to him, but he could have done without it. The good opinion which he had of himself was never shaken by adverse criticism; and the criticism on the other side, by which it was exalted, came from the enumeration of the number of copies sold. He was a firm reliant man, very little prone to change, who, when he had discovered the nature of his own talent, knew how to do the very best with it.

It may almost be said that Thackeray was the very opposite of this. Unsteadfast, idle, changeable of purpose, aware of his own intellect but not trusting it, no man ever failed more generally than he to put his best foot foremost. Full as his works are of pathos, full of humour, full of love and charity, tending, as they always do, to truth and honour and manly worth and womanly modesty, excelling, as they seem to me to do, most other written precepts that I know, they always seem to lack something that might have been there. There is a touch of vagueness which indicates that his pen was not firm while he was using it. He seems to me to have been dreaming ever of some high flight, and then to have told himself, with a half-broken heart, that it was beyond his power to soar up into those bright regions. I can fancy

as the sheets went from him every day he told himself, in regard to every sheet, that it was a failure. Dickens was quite sure of his sheets.

"I have got to make it shorter!" Then he would put his hands in his pockets, and stretch himself, and straighten the lines of his face, over which a smile would come, as though this intimation from his editor were the best joke in the world; and he would walk away, with his heart bleeding, and every nerve in an agony. There are none of us who want to have much of his work shortened now.

In 1837 Thackeray married Isabella, daughter of Colonel Matthew Shawe, and from this union there came three daughters, Anne, Jane, and Harriet. The name of the eldest, now Mrs. Richmond Ritchie, who has followed so closely in her father's steps, is a household word to the world of novel readers; the second died as a child; the younger lived to marry Leslie Stephen, who is too well known for me to say more than that he wrote, the other day, the little volume on Dr. Johnson in this series; but she, too, has now followed her father. Of Thackeray's married life what need be said shall be contained in a very few words. It was grievously unhappy; but the misery of it came from God, and was in no wise due to human fault. She became ill, and her mind failed her. There was a period during which he would not believe that her illness was more than illness, and then he clung to her and waited on her with an assiduity of affection which only made his task the more painful to him. At last it became evident that she should live in the companionship of some one with whom her life might be altogether quiet, and she has since been domiciled with a lady with whom she has been happy. Thus she was,

after but a few years of married life, taken away from him, and he became as it were a widower till the end of his days.

At this period, and indeed for some years after his marriage, his chief literary dependence was on *Fraser's Magazine*. He wrote also at this time in the *New Monthly Magazine*. In 1840 he brought out his *Paris Sketch Book*, as to which he tells us by a notice printed with the first edition, that half of the sketches had already been published in various periodicals. Here he used the name Michael Angelo Titmarsh, as he did also with the *Journey from Cornhill to Cairo*. Dickens had called himself Boz, and clung to the name with persistency as long as the public would permit it. Thackeray's affection for assumed names was more intermittent, though I doubt whether he used his own name altogether till it appeared on the title-page of *Vanity Fair*. About this time began his connection with *Punch*, in which much of his best work appeared. Looking back at our old friend as he used to come out from week to week at this time, we can hardly boast that we used to recognise how good the literary pabulum was that was then given for our consumption. We have to admit that the ordinary reader, as the ordinary picture-seer, requires to be guided by a name. We are moved to absolute admiration by a Raphael or a Hobbema, but hardly till we have learned the name of the painter, or, at any rate, the manner of his painting. I am not sure that all lovers of poetry would recognise a *Lycidas* coming from some hitherto unknown Milton. Gradually the good picture or the fine poem makes its way into the minds of a slowly discerning public. *Punch*, no doubt, became very popular, owing, perhaps, more to Leech, its artist, than to any other single person. Gradually the world

of readers began to know that there was a speciality of humour to be found in its pages,—fun and sense, satire and good humour, compressed together in small literary morsels as the nature of its columns required. Gradually the name of Thackeray as one of the band of brethren was buzzed about, and gradually became known as that of the chief of the literary brothers. But during the years in which he did much for *Punch*, say from 1843 to 1853, he was still struggling to make good his footing in literature. They knew him well in the *Punch* office, and no doubt the amount and regularity of the cheques from Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, the then and still owners of that happy periodical, made him aware that he had found for himself a satisfactory career. In "a good day for himself, the journal, and the world, Thackeray found *Punch*." This was said by his old friend Shirley Brooks, who himself lived to be editor of the paper and died in harness, and was said most truly. *Punch* was more congenial to him, and no doubt more generous, than *Fraser*. There was still something of the literary Bohemian about him, but not as it had been before. He was still unfixed, looking out for some higher career, not altogether satisfied to be no more than one of an anonymous band of brothers, even though the brothers were the brothers of *Punch*. We can only imagine what were his thoughts as to himself and that other man, who was then known as the great novelist of the day,—of a rivalry with whom he was certainly conscious. *Punch* was very much to him, but was not quite enough. That must have been very clear to himself as he meditated the beginning of *Vanity Fair*.

Of the contributions to the periodical, the best known now are *The Snob Papers* and *The Ballads of Policeman X*. But they were very numerous. Of Thackeray

as a poet, or maker of verses, I will say a few words in a chapter which will be devoted to his own so-called ballads. Here it seems only necessary to remark that there was not apparently any time in his career at which he began to think seriously of appearing before the public as a poet. Such was the intention early in their career with many of our best known prose writers, with Milton, and Goldsmith, and Samuel Johnson, with Scott, Macaulay, and more lately with Matthew Arnold; writers of verse and prose who ultimately prevailed some in one direction, and others in the other. Milton and Goldsmith have been known best as poets, Johnson and Macaulay as writers of prose. But with all of them there has been a distinct effort in each art. Thackeray seems to have tumbled into versification by accident; writing it as amateurs do, a little now and again for his own delectation, and to catch the taste of partial friends. The reader feels that Thackeray would not have begun to print his verses unless the opportunity of doing so had been brought in his way by his doings in prose. And yet he had begun to write verses when he was very young;—at Cambridge, as we have seen, when he contributed more to the fame of Timbuctoo than I think even Tennyson has done,—and in his early years at Paris. Here again, though he must have felt the strength of his own mingled humour and pathos, he always struck with an uncertain note till he had gathered strength and confidence by popularity. Good as they generally were, his verses were accidents, written not as a writer writes who claims to be a poet, but as though they might have been the relaxation of a doctor or a barrister.

And so they were. When Thackeray first settled himself in London, to make his living among the magazines and newspapers, I do not imagine that he counted much

on his poetic powers. He describes it all in his own dialogue between the pen and the album.

"Since he," says the pen, speaking of its master, Thackeray:

> Since he my faithful service did engage,
> To follow him through his queer pilgrimage
> I've drawn and written many a line and page.
>
> Caricatures I scribbled have, and rhymes,
> And dinner-cards, and picture pantomimes,
> And many little children's books at times.
>
> I've writ the foolish fancy of his brain;
> The aimless jest that, striking, hath caused pain;
> The idle word that he'd wish back again.
>
> I've helped him to pen many a line for bread.

It was thus he thought of his work. There had been caricatures, and rhymes, and many little children's books; and then the lines written for his bread, which, except that they were written for *Punch*, were hardly undertaken with a more serious purpose. In all of it there was ample seriousness, had he known it himself. What a tale of the restlessness, of the ambition, of the glory, of the misfortunes of a great country is given in the ballads of Peter the French drummer! Of that brain so full of fancy the pen had lightly written all the fancies. He did not know it when he was doing so, but with that word, fancy, he has described exactly the gift with which his brain was specially endowed. If a writer be accurate, or sonorous, or witty, or simply pathetic, he may, I think, gauge his own powers. He may do so after experience with something of certainty. But fancy is a gift which the owner of it cannot measure, and the power of which, when he is using it, he cannot himself understand.

There is the same lambent flame flickering over everything he did, even the dinner-cards and the picture pantomimes. He did not in the least know what he put into those things. So it was with his verses. It was only by degrees, when he was told of it by others, that he found that they too were of infinite value to him in his profession.

The *Irish Sketch Book* came out in 1843, in which he used, but only half used, the name of Michael Angelo Titmarsh. He dedicates it to Charles Lever, and in signing the dedication gave his own name. "Laying aside," he says, "for a moment the travelling title of Mr. Titmarsh, let me acknowledge these favours in my own name, and subscribe myself, &c. &c., W. M. Thackeray." So he gradually fell into the declaration of his own identity. In 1844 he made his journey to Turkey and Egypt,—*From Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, as he called it, still using the old *nom de plume*, but again signing the dedication with his own name. It was now made to the captain of the vessel in which he encountered that famous white squall, in describing which he has shown the wonderful power he had over words.

In 1846 was commenced, in numbers, the novel which first made his name well known to the world. This was *Vanity Fair*, a work to which it is evident that he devoted all his mind. Up to this time his writings had consisted of short contributions, chiefly of sketches, each intended to stand by itself in the periodical to which it was sent. *Barry Lyndon* had hitherto been the longest; but that and *Catherine Hayes*, and the *Hoggarty Diamond*, though stories continued through various numbers, had not as yet reached the dignity,—or at any rate the length,—of a three-volume novel. But of

late novels had grown to be much longer than those of the old well-known measure. Dickens had stretched his to nearly double the length, and had published them in twenty numbers. The attempt had caught the public taste and had been pre-eminently successful. The nature of the tale as originated by him was altogether unlike that to which the readers of modern novels had been used. No plot, with an arranged catastrophe or *dénoûment*, was necessary. Some untying of the various knots of the narrative no doubt were expedient, but these were of the simplest kind, done with the view of giving an end to that which might otherwise be endless. The adventures of a *Pickwick* or a *Nickleby* required very little of a plot, and this mode of telling a story, which might be continued on through any number of pages, as long as the characters were interesting, met with approval. Thackeray, who had never depended much on his plot in the shorter tales which he had hitherto told, determined to adopt the same form in his first great work, but with these changes ;—That as the central character with Dickens had always been made beautiful with unnatural virtue,—for who was ever so unselfish as *Pickwick*, so manly and modest as *Nicholas*, or so good a boy as *Oliver?*—so should his centre of interest be in every respect abnormally bad.

As to Thackeray's reason for this,—or rather as to that condition of mind which brought about this result,—I will say something in a final chapter, in which I will endeavour to describe the nature and effect of his work generally. Here it will be necessary only to declare that, such was the choice he now made of a subject in his first attempt to rise out of a world of small literary contributions, into the more assured position of the author of a work of importance. We are aware that the monthly nurses of

periodical literature did not at first smile on the effort. The proprietors of magazines did not see their way to undertake *Vanity Fair*, and the publishers are said to have generally looked shy upon it. At last it was brought out in numbers,—twenty-four numbers instead of twenty, as with those by Dickens,—under the guardian hands of Messrs. Bradbury and Evans. This was completed in 1848, and then it was that, at the age of thirty-seven, Thackeray first achieved for himself a name and reputation through the country. Before this he had been known at *Fraser's* and at the *Punch* office. He was known at the Garrick Club, and had become individually popular among literary men in London. He had made many fast friends, and had been, as it were, found out by persons of distinction. But Jones, and Smith, and Robinson, in Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, did not know him as they knew Dickens, Carlyle, Tennyson, and Macaulay,—not as they knew Landseer, or Stansfeld, or Turner; not as they knew Macready, Charles Kean, or Miss Faucit. In that year, 1848, his name became common in the memoirs of the time. On the 5th of June I find him dining with Macready, to meet Sir J. Wilson, Panizzi, Landseer, and others. A few days afterwards Macready dined with him. "Dined with Thackeray, met the Gordons, Kenyons, Procters, Reeve, Villiers, Evans, Stansfeld, and saw Mrs. Sartoris and S. C. Dance, White, H. Goldsmid, in the evening." Again; "Dined with Forster, having called and taken up Brookfield, met Rintoul, Kenyon, Procter, Kinglake, Alfred Tennyson, Thackeray." Macready was very accurate in jotting down the names of those he entertained, who entertained him, or were entertained with him. *Vanity Fair* was coming out, and Thackeray had become one of the personages in literary society.

In the January number of 1848 the *Edinburgh Review* had an article on Thackeray's works generally as they were then known. It purports to combine the *Irish Sketch Book*, the *Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, and *Vanity Fair* as far as it had then gone; but it does in truth deal chiefly with the literary merits of the latter. I will quote a passage from the article, as proving in regard to Thackeray's work an opinion which was well founded, and as telling the story of his life as far as it was then known;

"Full many a valuable truth," says the reviewer, "has been sent undulating through the air by men who have lived and died unknown. At this moment the rising generation are supplied with the best of their mental aliment by writers whose names are a dead letter to the mass; and among the most remarkable of these is Michael Angelo Titmarsh, alias William Makepeace Thackeray, author of the *Irish Sketch Book*, of *A Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, of *Jeames's Diary*, of *The Snob Papers* in *Punch*, of *Vanity Fair*, etc. etc.

"Mr. Thackeray is now about thirty-seven years of age, of a good family, and originally intended for the bar. He kept seven or eight terms at Cambridge, but left the university without taking a degree, with the view of becoming an artist; and we well remember, ten or twelve years ago, finding him day after day engaged in copying pictures in the Louvre, in order to qualify himself for his intended profession. It may be doubted, however, whether any degree of assiduity would have enabled him to excel in the money-making branches, for his talent was altogether of the Hogarth kind, and was principally remarkable in the pen-and-ink sketches of character and situation, which he dashed off for the

amusement of his friends. At the end of two or three years of desultory application he gave up the notion of becoming a painter, and took to literature. He set up and edited with marked ability a weekly journal, on the plan of *The Athenæum* and *Literary Gazette*, but was unable to compete successfully with such long-established rivals. He then became a regular man of letters,—that is, he wrote for respectable magazines and newspapers, until the attention attracted to his contributions in *Fraser's Magazine* and *Punch* emboldened him to start on his own account, and risk an independent publication." Then follows a eulogistic and, as I think, a correct criticism on the book as far as it had gone. There are a few remarks perhaps a little less eulogistic as to some of his minor writings, *The Snob Papers* in particular; and at the end there is a statement with which I think we shall all now agree; "A writer with such a pen and pencil as Mr. Thackeray's is an acquisition of real and high value in our literature."

The reviewer has done his work in a tone friendly to the author, whom he knew,[1]—as indeed it may be said that this little book will be written with the same feeling,— but the public has already recognised the truth of the review generally. There can be no doubt that Thackeray, though he had hitherto been but a contributor of anonymous pieces to periodicals,—to what is generally considered as merely the ephemeral literature of the month,—had already become effective on the tastes and morals of readers. Affectation of finery; the vulgarity which apes good breeding but never approaches it;

[1] The article was written by Abraham Hayward, who is still with us, and was no doubt instigated by a desire to assist Thackeray in his struggle upwards, in which it succeeded.

dishonest gambling, whether with dice or with railway shares; and that low taste for literary excitement which is gratified by mysterious murders and Old Bailey executions had already received condign punishment from Yellowplush, Titmarsh, Fitzboodle, and Ikey Solomon. Under all those names Thackeray had plied his trade as a satirist. Though the truths, as the reviewer said, had been merely sent undulating through the air, they had already become effective.

Thackeray had now become a personage,—one of the recognised stars of the literary heaven of the day. It was an honour to know him; and we may well believe that the givers of dinners were proud to have him among their guests. He had opened his oyster,—with his pen, an achievement which he cannot be said to have accomplished until *Vanity Fair* had come out. In inquiring about him from those who survive him, and knew him well in those days, I always hear the same account. "If I could only tell you the impromptu lines which fell from him!" "If I had only kept the drawings from his pen, which used to be chucked about as though they were worth nothing!" "If I could only remember the drolleries!" Had they been kept, there might now be many volumes of these sketches, as to which the reviewer says that their talent was "altogether of the Hogarth kind." Could there be any kind more valuable? Like Hogarth, he could always make his picture tell his story; though, unlike Hogarth, he had not learned to draw. I have had sent to me for my inspection an album of drawings and letters, which, in the course of twenty years, from 1829 to 1849, were despatched from Thackeray to his old friend Edward Fitzgerald. Looking at the wit displayed in the drawings, I feel

inclined to say that had he persisted he would have been a second Hogarth. There is a series of ballet scenes, in which "Flore et Zephyr" are the two chief performers, which for expression and drollery exceed anything that I know of the kind. The set in this book are lithographs, which were published, but I do not remember to have seen them elsewhere. There are still among us many who knew him well;—Edward Fitzgerald and George Venables, James Spedding and Kinglake, Mrs. Procter,—the widow of Barry Cornwall, who loved him well,—and Monckton Milnes, as he used to be, whose touching lines written just after Thackeray's death will close this volume, Frederick Pollock and Frank Fladgate, John Blackwood and William Russell,—and they all tell the same story. Though he so rarely talked, as good talkers do, and was averse to sit down to work, there were always falling from his mouth and pen those little pearls. Among the friends who had been kindest and dearest to him in the days of his strugglings he once mentioned three to me, —Matthew Higgins, or Jacob Omnium as he was more popularly called; William Stirling, who became Sir William Maxwell; and Russell Sturgis, who is now the senior partner in the great house of Barings. Alas, only the last of these three is left among us! Thackeray was a man of no great power of conversation. I doubt whether he ever shone in what is called general society. He was not a man to be valuable at a dinner-table as a good talker. It was when there were but two or three together that he was happy himself and made others happy; and then it would rather be from some special piece of drollery that the joy of the moment would come, than from the discussion of ordinary topics. After so many years his old friends remember the fag-ends of the doggerel lines which used to drop from him without any

effort on all occasions of jollity. And though he could be very sad,—laden with melancholy, as I think must have been the case with him always,—the feeling of fun would quickly come to him, and the queer rhymes would be poured out as plentifully as the sketches were made. Here is a contribution which I find hanging in the memory of an old friend, the serious nature of whose literary labours would certainly have driven such lines from his mind, had they not at the time caught fast hold of him:

> In the romantic little town of Highbury
> My father kept a circulatin' library;
> He followed in his youth that man immortal, who
> Conquered the Frenchmen on the plains of Waterloo.
> Mamma was an inhabitant of Drogheda,
> Very good she was to darn and to embroider.
> In the famous island of Jamaica,
> For thirty years I've been a sugar-baker;
> And here I sit, the Muses' 'appy vot'ry,
> A cultivatin' every kind of po'try.

There may, perhaps, have been a mistake in a line, but the poem has been handed down with fair correctness over a period of forty years. He was always versifying. He once owed me five pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence, his share of a dinner bill at Richmond. He sent me a cheque for the amount in rhyme, giving the proper financial document on the second half of a sheet of note paper. I gave the poem away as an autograph, and now forget the lines. This was all trifling, the reader will say. No doubt. Thackeray was always trifling, and yet always serious. In attempting to understand his character it is necessary for you to bear within your own mind the idea that he was always, within his own bosom, encountering melancholy with buffoonery, and meanness with satire. The very spirit of burlesque dwelt within him,—a spirit which

does not see the grand the less because of the travesties which it is always engendering.

In his youthful,—all but boyish,—days in London, he delighted to "put himself up" at the Bedford, in Covent Garden. Then in his early married days he lived in Albion Street, and from thence went to Great Coram Street, till his household there was broken up by his wife's illness. He afterwards took lodgings in St. James's Chambers, and then a house in Young Street, Kensington. Here he lived from 1847, when he was achieving his great triumph with *Vanity Fair*, down to 1853, when he removed to a house which he bought in Onslow Square. In Young Street there had come to lodge opposite to him an Irish gentleman, who, on the part of his injured country, felt very angry with Thackeray. *The Irish Sketch Book* had not been complimentary, nor were the descriptions which Thackeray had given generally of Irishmen; and there was extant an absurd idea that in his abominable heroine Catherine Hayes he had alluded to Miss Catherine Hayes the Irish singer. Word was taken to Thackeray that this Irishman intended to come across the street and avenge his country on the calumniator's person. Thackeray immediately called upon the gentleman, and it is said that the visit was pleasant to both parties. There certainly was no blood shed.

He had now succeeded,—in 1848,—in making for himself a standing as a man of letters, and an income. What was the extent of his income I have no means of saying; nor is it a subject on which, as I think, inquiry should be made. But he was not satisfied with his position. He felt it to be precarious, and he was always thinking of what he owed to his two girls. That *arbitrium popularis aurae* on which he depended for his daily bread was not

regarded by him with the confidence which it deserved. He did not probably know how firm was the hold he had obtained of the public ear. At any rate he was anxious, and endeavoured to secure for himself a permanent income in the public service. He had become by this time acquainted, probably intimate, with the Marquis of Clanricarde, who was then Postmaster-General. In 1848 there fell a vacancy in the situation of Assistant-Secretary at the General Post Office, and Lord Clanricarde either offered it to him or promised to give it to him. The Postmaster-General had the disposal of the place,—but was not altogether free from control in the matter. When he made known his purpose at the Post Office, he was met by an assurance from the officer next under him that the thing could not be done. The services were wanted of a man who had had experience in the Post Office; and, moreover, it was necessary that the feelings of other gentlemen should be consulted. Men who have been serving in an office many years do not like to see even a man of genius put over their heads. In fact, the office would have been up in arms at such an injustice. Lord Clanricarde, who in a matter of patronage was not scrupulous, was still a good-natured man and amenable. He attempted to befriend his friend till he found that it was impossible, and then, with the best grace in the world, accepted the official nominee that was offered to him.

It may be said that had Thackeray succeeded in that attempt he would surely have ruined himself. No man can be fit for the management and performance of special work who has learned nothing of it before his thirty-seventh year; and no man could have been less so than Thackeray. There are men who, though they be not fit, are disposed to learn their lesson and make themselves as

fit as possible. Such cannot be said to have been the case with this man. For the special duties which he would have been called upon to perform, consisting to a great extent of the maintenance of discipline over a large body of men, training is required, and the service would have suffered for awhile under any untried elderly tiro. Another man might have put himself into harness. Thackeray never would have done so. The details of his work after the first month would have been inexpressibly wearisome to him. To have gone into the city, and to have remained there every day from eleven till five, would have been all but impossible to him. He would not have done it. And then he would have been tormented by the feeling that he was taking the pay and not doing the work. There is a belief current, not confined to a few, that a man may be a Government Secretary with a generous salary, and have nothing to do. The idea is something that remains to us from the old days of sinecures. If there be now remaining places so pleasant, or gentlemen so happy, I do not know them. Thackeray's notion of his future duties was probably very vague. He would have repudiated the notion that he was looking for a sinecure, but no doubt considered that the duties would be easy and light. It is not too much to assert, that he who could drop his pearls as I have said above, throwing them wide cast without an effort, would have found his work as Assistant-Secretary at the General Post Office to be altogether too much for him. And then it was no doubt his intention to join literature with the Civil Service. He had been taught to regard the Civil Service as easy, and had counted upon himself as able to add it to his novels, and his work with his *Punch* brethren, and to his contributions generally to the literature of the day. He might have done so, could

he have risen at five, and have sat at his private desk for three hours before he began his official routine at the public one. A capability for grinding, an aptitude for continuous task work, a disposition to sit in one's chair as though fixed to it by cobbler's wax, will enable a man in the prime of life to go through the tedium of a second day's work every day; but of all men Thackeray was the last to bear the wearisome perseverance of such a life. Some more or less continuous attendance at his office he must have given, and with it would have gone *Punch* and the novels, the ballads, the burlesques, the essays, the lectures, and the monthly papers full of mingled satire and tenderness, which have left to us that Thackeray which we could so ill afford to lose out of the literature of the nineteenth century. And there would have remained to the Civil Service the memory of a disgraceful job.

He did not, however, give up the idea of the Civil Service. In a letter to his American friend, Mr. Reed, dated 8th November, 1854, he says; "The secretaryship of our Legation at Washington was vacant the other day, and I instantly asked for it; but in the very kindest letter Lord Clarendon showed how the petition was impossible. First, the place was given away. Next, it would not be fair to appoint out of the service. But the first was an excellent reason;—not a doubt of it." The validity of the second was probably not so apparent to him as it is to one who has himself waited long for promotion. "So if ever I come," he continues, "as I hope and trust to do this time next year, it must be in my own coat, and not the Queen's." Certainly in his own coat, and not in the Queen's, must Thackeray do anything by which he could mend his fortune or make his reputation. There never was a man less fit for the Queen's coat.

Nevertheless he held strong ideas that much was due by the Queen's ministers to men of letters, and no doubt had his feelings of slighted merit, because no part of the debt due was paid to him. In 1850 he wrote a letter to *The Morning Chronicle*, which has since been republished, in which he alludes to certain opinions which had been put forth in *The Examiner*. "I don't see," he says, "why men of letters should not very cheerfully coincide with Mr. Examiner in accepting all the honours, places, and prizes which they can get. The amount of such as will be awarded to them will not, we may be pretty sure, impoverish the country much; and if it is the custom of the State to reward by money, or titles of honour, or stars and garters of any sort, individuals who do the country service,—and if individuals are gratified at having 'Sir' or 'My lord' appended to their names, or stars and ribbons hooked on to their coats and waistcoats, as men most undoubtedly are, and as their wives, families, and relations are,—there can be no reason why men of letters should not have the chance, as well as men of the robe or the sword; or why, if honour and money are good for one profession, they should not be good for another. No man in other callings thinks himself degraded by receiving a reward from his Government; nor, surely, need the literary man be more squeamish about pensions, and ribbons, and titles, than the ambassador, or general, or judge. Every European state but ours rewards its men of letters. The American Government gives them their full share of its small patronage; and if Americans, why not Englishmen?"

In this a great subject is discussed which would be too long for these pages; but I think that there now exists a feeling that literature can herself, for herself, produce a rank as effective as any that a Queen's minister

can bestow. Surely it would be a repainting of the lily, an adding a flavour to the rose, a gilding of refined gold to create to-morrow a Lord Viscount Tennyson, a Baron Carlyle, or a Right Honourable Sir Robert Browning. And as for pay and pension, the less the better of it for any profession, unless so far as it may be payment made for work done. Then the higher the payment the better, in literature as in all other trades. It may be doubted even whether a special rank of its own be good for literature, such as that which is achieved by the happy possessors of the forty chairs of the Academy in France. Even though they had an angel to make the choice,—which they have not,—that angel would do more harm to the excluded than good to the selected.

Pendennis, *Esmond*, and *The Newcomes* followed *Vanity Fair*,—not very quickly indeed, always at an interval of two years,—in 1850, 1852, and 1854. As I purpose to devote a separate short chapter, or part of a chapter, to each of these, I need say nothing here of their special merits or demerits. *Esmond* was brought out as a whole. The others appeared in numbers. "He lisped in numbers, for the numbers came." It is a mode of pronunciation in literature by no means very articulate, but easy of production and lucrative. But though easy it is seductive, and leads to idleness. An author by means of it can raise money and reputation on his book before he has written it, and when the pang of parturition is over in regard to one part, he feels himself entitled to a period of ease because the amount required for the next division will occupy him only half the month. This to Thackeray was so alluring that the entirety of the final half was not always given to the task. His self-reproaches and bemoanings when sometimes the day for reappearing would come

terribly nigh, while yet the necessary amount of copy was far from being ready, were often very ludicrous and very sad; —ludicrous because he never told of his distress without adding to it something of ridicule which was irresistible, and sad because those who loved him best were aware that physical suffering had already fallen upon him, and that he was deterred by illness from the exercise of continuous energy. I myself did not know him till after the time now in question. My acquaintance with him was quite late in his life. But he has told me something of it, and I have heard from those who lived with him how continual were his sufferings. In 1854, he says in one of his letters to Mr. Reed,—the only private letters of his which I know to have been published; "I am to-day just out of bed after another, about the dozenth, severe fit of spasms which I have had this year. My book would have been written but for them." His work was always going on, but though not fuller of matter,—that would have been almost impossible,—would have been better in manner had he been delayed neither by suffering nor by that palsying of the energies which suffering produces.

This ought to have been the happiest period of his life, and should have been very happy. He had become fairly easy in his circumstances. He had succeeded in his work, and had made for himself a great name. He was fond of popularity, and especially anxious to be loved by a small circle of friends. These good things he had thoroughly achieved. Immediately after the publication of *Vanity Fair* he stood high among the literary heroes of his country, and had endeared himself especially to a special knot of friends. His face and figure, his six feet four in height, with his flowing hair, already nearly gray,

and his broken nose, his broad forehead and ample chest, encountered everywhere either love or respect; and his daughters to him were all the world,—the bairns of whom he says, at the end of the *White Squall* ballad;

> I thought, as day was breaking,
> My little girls were waking,
> And smiling, and making
> A prayer at home for me.

Nothing could have been more tender or endearing than his relations with his children. But still there was a skeleton in his cupboard,—or rather two skeletons. His home had been broken up by his wife's malady, and his own health was shattered. When he was writing *Pendennis*, in 1849, he had a severe fever, and then those spasms came, of which four or five years afterwards he wrote to Mr. Reed. His home, as a home should be, was never restored to him,—or his health. Just at that period of life at which a man generally makes a happy exchange in taking his wife's drawing-room in lieu of the smoking-room of his club, and assumes those domestic ways of living which are becoming and pleasant for matured years, that drawing-room and those domestic ways were closed against him. The children were then no more than babies, as far as society was concerned,—things to kiss and play with, and make a home happy if they could only have had their mother with them. I have no doubt there were those who thought that Thackeray was very jolly under his adversity. Jolly he was. It was the manner of the man to be so,—if that continual playfulness which was natural to him, lying over a melancholy which was as continual, be compatible with jollity. He laughed, and ate, and drank, and threw his pearls about with miraculous profusion. But I fancy that he was far

from happy. I remember once, when I was young, receiving advice as to the manner in which I had better spend my evenings; I was told that I ought to go home, drink tea, and read good books. It was excellent advice, but I found that the reading of good books in solitude was not an occupation congenial to me. It was so I take it, with Thackeray. He did not like his lonely drawing-room, and went back to his life among the clubs by no means with contentment.

In 1853, Thackeray having then his own two girls to provide for, added a third to his family, and adopted Amy Crowe, the daughter of an old friend, and sister of the well-known artist now among us. How it came to pass that she wanted a home, or that this special home suited her, it would be unnecessary here to tell even if I knew. But that he did give a home to this young lady, making her in all respects the same as another daughter, should be told of him. He was a man who liked to broaden his back for the support of others, and to make himself easy under such burdens. In 1862, she married a Thackeray cousin, a young officer with the Victoria Cross, Edward Thackeray, and went out to India,—where she died.

In 1854, the year in which *The Newcomes* came out, Thackeray had broken his close alliance with *Punch*. In December of that year there appeared from his pen an article in *The Quarterly* on *John Leech's Pictures of Life and Character*. It is a rambling discourse on picture-illustration in general, full of interest, but hardly good as a criticism,—a portion of literary work for which he was not specially fitted. In it he tells us how Richard Doyle, the artist, had given up his work for *Punch*, not having been able, as a Roman Catholic, to endure the skits which, at

that time, were appearing in one number after another against what was then called Papal aggression. The reviewer,—Thackeray himself,—then tells us of the secession of himself from the board of brethren. "Another member of Mr. Punch's cabinet, the biographer of *Jeames*, the author of *The Snob Papers*, resigned his functions, on account of Mr. Punch's assaults upon the present Emperor of the French nation, whose anger Jeames thought it was unpatriotic to arouse." How hard it must be for Cabinets to agree! This man or that is sure to have some pet conviction of his own, and the better the man the stronger the conviction! Then the reviewer went on in favour of the artist of whom he was specially speaking, making a comparison which must at the time have been odious enough to some of the brethren. "There can be no blinking the fact that in Mr. Punch's Cabinet John Leech is the right-hand man. Fancy a number of *Punch* without Leech's pictures! What would you give for it?" Then he breaks out into strong admiration of that one friend,—perhaps with a little disregard as to the feelings of other friends.[1] This *Critical Review*, if it may properly be so called,—at any rate it is so named as now published,—is to be found in our author's collected works, in the same volume with *Catherine*. It is there preceded by another, from *The Westminster Review*, written fourteen years earlier, on

[1] For a week there existed at the *Punch* office a grudge against Thackeray in reference to this awkward question: "What would you give for your *Punch* without John Leech?" Then he asked the confraternity to dinner,—*more Thackerayano*,—and the confraternity came. Who can doubt but they were very jolly over the little blunder? For years afterwards Thackeray was a guest at the well-known *Punch* dinner, though he was no longer one of the contributors.

The Genius of Cruikshank. This contains a descriptive catalogue of Cruikshank's works up to that period, and is interesting from the piquant style in which it is written. I fancy that these two are the only efforts of the kind which he made,—and in both he dealt with the two great caricaturists of his time, he himself being, in the imaginative part of a caricaturist's work, equal in power to either of them.

We now come to a phase of Thackeray's life in which he achieved a remarkable success, attributable rather to his fame as a writer than to any particular excellence in the art which he then exercised. He took upon himself the functions of a lecturer, being moved to do so by a hope that he might thus provide a sum of money for the future sustenance of his children. No doubt he had been advised to this course, though I do not know from whom specially the advice may have come. Dickens had already considered the subject, but had not yet consented to read in public for money on his own account. John Forster, writing of the year 1846, says of Dickens and the then only thought-of exercise of a new profession; "I continued to oppose, for reasons to be stated in their place, that which he had set his heart upon too strongly to abandon, and which I still can wish he had preferred to surrender with all that seemed to be its enormous gain." And again he says, speaking of a proposition which had been made to Dickens from the town of Bradford; "At first this was entertained, but was abandoned, with some reluctance, upon the argument that to become publicly a reader must alter, without improving, his position publicly as a writer, and that it was a change to be justified only when the higher calling should have failed of the old success." The meaning of this was that the money to be made

would be sweet, but that the descent to a profession which was considered to be lower than that of literature itself would carry with it something that was bitter. It was as though one who had sat on the woolsack as Lord Chancellor should raise the question whether for the sake of the income attached to it, he might, without disgrace, occupy a seat on a lower bench; as though an architect should consider with himself the propriety of making his fortune as a contractor; or the head of a college lower his dignity, while he increased his finances, by taking pupils. When such discussions arise, money generally carries the day,—and should do so. When convinced that money may be earned without disgrace, we ought to allow money to carry the day. When we talk of sordid gain and filthy lucre, we are generally hypocrites. If gains be sordid and lucre filthy, where is the priest, the lawyer, the doctor, or the man of literature, who does not wish for dirty hands? An income, and the power of putting by something for old age, something for those who are to come after, is the wholesome and acknowledged desire of all professional men. Thackeray having children, and being gifted with no power of making his money go very far, was anxious enough on the subject. We may say now, that had he confined himself to his pen, he would not have wanted while he lived, but would have left but little behind him. That he was anxious we have seen, by his attempts to subsidise his literary gains by a Government office. I cannot but think that had he undertaken public duties for which he was ill qualified, and received a salary which he could hardly have earned, he would have done less for his fame than by reading to the public. Whether he did that well or ill, he did it well enough for the money. The people who heard him, and

who paid for their seats, were satisfied with their bargain, —as they were also in the case of Dickens; and I venture to say that in becoming publicly a reader, neither did Dickens or Thackeray "alter his position as a writer," and "that it was a change to be justified," though the success of the old calling had in no degree waned. What Thackeray did enabled him to leave a comfortable income for his children, and one earned honestly, with the full approval of the world around him.

Having saturated his mind with the literature of Queen Anne's time,—not probably in the first instance as a preparation for *Esmond*, but in such a way as to induce him to create an Esmond,—he took the authors whom he knew so well as the subject for his first series of lectures. He wrote *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* in 1851, while he must have been at work on *Esmond*, and first delivered the course at Willis's Rooms in that year. He afterwards went with these through many of our provincial towns, and then carried them to the United States, where he delivered them to large audiences in the winter of 1852 and 1853. Some few words as to the merits of the composition I will endeavour to say in another place. I myself never heard him lecture, and can therefore give no opinion of the performance. That which I have heard from others has been very various. It is, I think, certain that he had none of those wonderful gifts of elocution which made it a pleasure to listen to Dickens, whatever he read or whatever he said; nor had he that power of application by using which his rival taught himself with accuracy the exact effect to be given to every word. The rendering of a piece by Dickens was composed as an oratorio is composed, and was then studied by heart as music is studied

And the piece was all given by memory, without any looking at the notes or words. There was nothing of this with Thackeray. But the thing read was in itself of great interest to educated people. The words were given clearly, with sufficient intonation for easy understanding, so that they who were willing to hear something from him felt on hearing that they had received full value for their money. At any rate, the lectures were successful. The money was made,—and was kept.

He came from his first trip to America to his new house in Onslow Square, and then published *The Newcomes*. This, too, was one of his great works, as to which I shall have to speak hereafter. Then, having enjoyed his success in the first attempt to lecture, he prepared a second series. He never essayed the kind of reading which with Dickens became so wonderfully popular. Dickens recited portions from his well-known works. Thackeray wrote his lectures expressly for the purpose. They have since been added to his other literature, but they were prepared as lectures. The second series were *The Four Georges*. In a lucrative point of view they were even more successful than the first, the sum of money realised in the United States having been considerable. In England they were less popular, even if better attended, the subject chosen having been distasteful to many. There arose the question whether too much freedom had not been taken with an office which, though it be no longer considered to be founded on divine right, is still as sacred as can be anything that is human. If there is to remain among us a sovereign, that sovereign, even though divested of political power, should be endowed with all that personal respect can give. If we wish ourselves to be high, we should treat

that which is over us as high. And this should not depend altogether on personal character, though we know, —as we have reason to know,—how much may be added to the firmness of the feeling by personal merit. The respect of which we speak should, in the strongest degree, be a possession of the immediate occupant, and will naturally become dim,—or perhaps be exaggerated,—in regard to the past, as history or fable may tell of them. No one need hesitate to speak his mind of King John, let him be ever so strong a stickler for the privileges of majesty. But there are degrees of distance, and the throne of which we wish to preserve the dignity seems to be assailed when unmeasured evil is said of one who has sat there within our own memory. There would seem to each of us to be a personal affront were a departed relative delineated with all those faults by which we must own that even our near relatives have been made imperfect. It is a general conviction as to this which so frequently turns the biography of those recently dead into mere eulogy. The fictitious charity which is enjoined by the *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* banishes truth. The feeling of which I speak almost leads me at this moment to put down my pen. And, if so much be due to all subjects, is less due to a sovereign?

Considerations such as these diminished, I think, the popularity of Thackeray's second series of lectures; or, rather, not their popularity, but the estimation in which they were held. On this head he defended himself more than once very gallantly, and had a great deal to say on his side of the question. "Suppose, for example, in America,—in Philadelphia or in New York,—that I had spoken about George IV. in terms of praise and affected reverence, do you believe they would have hailed his name with cheers, or have heard it with anything of

respect?" And again; "We degrade our own honour and the sovereign's by unduly and unjustly praising him; and the mere slaverer and flatterer is one who comes forward, as it were, with flash notes, and pays with false coin his tribute to Cæsar. I don't disguise that I feel somehow on my trial here for loyalty,—for honest English feeling." This was said by Thackeray at a dinner at Edinburgh, in 1857, and shows how the matter rested on his mind. Thackeray's loyalty was no doubt true enough, but was mixed with but little of reverence. He was one who revered modesty and innocence rather than power, against which he had in the bottom of his heart something of republican tendency. His leaning was no doubt of the more manly kind. But in what he said at Edinburgh he hardly hit the nail on the head. No one had suggested that he should have said good things of a king which he did not believe to be true. The question was whether it may not be well sometimes for us to hold our tongues. An American literary man, here in England, would not lecture on the morals of Hamilton, on the manners of General Jackson, on the general amenities of President Johnson.

In 1857 Thackeray stood for Oxford, in the liberal interest, in opposition to Mr. Cardwell. He had been induced to do this by his old friend Charles Neate, who himself twice sat for Oxford, and died now not many months since. He polled 1,017 votes, against 1,070 by Mr. Cardwell; and was thus again saved by his good fortune from attempting to fill a situation in which he would not have shone. There are, no doubt, many to whom a seat in Parliament comes almost as the birthright of a well-born and well-to-do English gentleman. They go there with no more idea of shining than they do when

they are elected to a first-class club;—hardly with more idea of being useful. It is the thing to do, and the House of Commons is the place where a man ought to be—for a certain number of hours. Such men neither succeed nor fail, for nothing is expected of them. From such a one as Thackeray something would have been expected, which would not have been forthcoming. He was too desultory for regular work,—full of thought, but too vague for practical questions. He could not have endured to sit for two or three hours at a time with his hat over his eyes, pretending to listen, as is the duty of a good legislator. He was a man intolerant of tedium, and in the best of his time impatient of slow work. Nor, though his liberal feelings were very strong, were his political convictions definite or accurate. He was a man who mentally drank in much, feeding his fancy hourly with what he saw, what he heard, what he read, and then pouring it all out with an immense power of amplification. But it would have been impossible for him to study and bring home to himself the various points of a complicated bill with a hundred and fifty clauses. In becoming a man of letters, and taking that branch of letters which fell to him, he obtained the special place that was fitted for him. He was a round peg in a round hole. There was no other hole which he would have fitted nearly so well. But he had his moment of political ambition, like others,—and paid a thousand pounds for his attempt.

In 1857 the first number of *The Virginians* appeared, and the last,—the twenty-fourth,—in October, 1859. This novel, as all my readers are aware, is a continuance of *Esmond*, and will be spoken of in its proper place. He was then forty-eight years old, very gray, with much of

age upon him, which had come from suffering,—age shown by dislike of activity and by an old man's way of thinking about many things,—speaking as though the world were all behind him instead of before; but still with a stalwart outward bearing, very erect in his gait, and a countenance peculiarly expressive and capable of much dignity. I speak of his personal appearance at this time, because it was then only that I became acquainted with him. In 1859 he undertook the last great work of his life, the editorship of *The Cornhill Magazine*, a periodical set on foot by Mr. George Smith, of the house of Smith and Elder, with an amount of energy greater than has generally been bestowed upon such enterprises. It will be well remembered still how much *The Cornhill* was talked about and thought of before it first appeared, and how much of that thinking and talking was due to the fact that Mr. Thackeray was to edit it. *Macmillan's*, I think, was the first of the shilling magazines, having preceded *The Cornhill* by a month, and it would ill become me, who have been a humble servant to each of them, to give to either any preference. But it must be acknowledged that a great deal was expected from *The Cornhill*, and I think it will be confessed that it was the general opinion that a great deal was given by it. Thackeray had become big enough to give a special *éclat* to any literary exploit to which he attached himself. Since the days of *The Constitutional* he had fought his way up the ladder and knew how to take his stand there with an assurance of success. When it became known to the world of readers that a new magazine was to appear under Thackeray's editorship, the world of readers was quite sure that there would be a large sale. Of the first number over one hundred and ten

thousand were sold, and of the second and third over one hundred thousand. It is in the nature of such things that the sale should fall off when the novelty is over. People believe that a new delight has come, a new joy for ever, and then find that the joy is not quite so perfect or enduring as they had expected. But the commencement of such enterprises may be taken as a measure of what will follow. The magazine, either by Thackeray's name or by its intrinsic merits,—probably by both,—achieved a great success. My acquaintance with him grew from my having been one of his staff from the first.

About two months before the opening day I wrote to him suggesting that he should accept from me a series of four short stories on which I was engaged. I got back a long letter in which he said nothing about my short stories, but asking whether I could go to work at once and let him have a long novel, so that it might begin with the first number. At the same time I heard from the publisher, who suggested some interesting little details as to honorarium. The little details were very interesting, but absolutely no time was allowed to me. It was required that the first portion of my book should be in the printer's hands within a month. Now it was my theory,—and ever since this occurrence has been my practice,—to see the end of my own work before the public should see the commencement.[1] If I did this thing I must not only abandon my theory, but instantly contrive a story, or

[1] I had begun an Irish story and half finished it, which would reach just the required length. Would that do, I asked. I was civilly told that my Irish story would no doubt be charming, but was not quite the thing that was wanted. Could I not begin a new one,—English,—and if possible about clergymen? The details were so interesting that had a couple of archbishops been demanded, I should have produced them.

begin to write it before it was contrived. That was what I did, urged by the interesting nature of the details. A novelist cannot always at the spur of the moment make his plot and create his characters who shall, with an arranged sequence of events, live with a certain degree of eventful decorum, through that portion of their lives which is to be portrayed. I hesitated, but allowed myself to be allured to what I felt to be wrong, much dreading the event. How seldom is it that theories stand the wear and tear of practice! I will not say that the story which came was good, but it was received with greater favour than any I had written before or have written since. I think that almost anything would have been then accepted coming under Thackeray's editorship.

I was astonished that work should be required in such haste, knowing that much preparation had been made, and that the service of almost any English novelist might have been obtained if asked for in due time. It was my readiness that was needed, rather than any other gift! The riddle was read to me after a time. Thackeray had himself intended to begin with one of his own great novels, but had put it off till it was too late. *Lovel the Widower* was commenced at the same time with my own story, but *Lovel the Widower* was not substantial enough to appear as the principal joint at the banquet. Though your guests will undoubtedly dine off the little delicacies you provide for them, there must be a heavy saddle of mutton among the viands prepared. I was the saddle of mutton, Thackeray having omitted to get his joint down to the fire in time enough. My fitness lay in my capacity for quick roasting.

It may be interesting to give a list of the contributors to the first number. My novel called *Framley Parsonage*

came first. At this banquet the saddle of mutton was served before the delicacies. Then there was a paper by Sir John Bowring on *The Chinese and Outer Barbarians*. The commencing number of *Lovel the Widower* followed. George Lewes came next with his first chapters of *Studies in Animal Life*. Then there was Father Prout's *Inauguration Ode*, dedicated to the author of *Vanity Fair*, —which should have led the way. I need hardly say that Father Prout was the Rev. F. Mahony. Then followed *Our Volunteers*, by Sir John Burgoyne; *A Man of Letters of the Last Generation*, by Thornton Hunt; *The Search for Sir John Franklin*, from a private journal of an officer of the Fox, now Sir Allen Young; and *The First Morning of* 1860, by Mrs. Archer Clive. The number was concluded by the first of those *Roundabout Papers* by Thackeray himself, which became so delightful a portion of the literature of *The Cornhill Magazine*.

It would be out of my power, and hardly interesting, to give an entire list of those who wrote for *The Cornhill* under Thackeray's editorial direction. But I may name a few, to show how strong was the support which he received. Those who contributed to the first number I have named. Among those who followed were Alfred Tennyson, Jacob Omnium, Lord Houghton, William Russell, Mrs. Beecher Stowe, Mrs. Browning, Robert Bell, George Augustus Sala, Mrs. Gaskell, James Hinton, Mary Howitt, John Kaye, Charles Lever, Frederick Locker, Laurence Oliphant, John Ruskin, Fitzjames Stephen, T. A. Trollope, Henry Thompson, Herman Merivale, Adelaide Proctor, Matthew Arnold, the present Lord Lytton, and Miss Thackeray, now Mrs. Ritchie. Thackeray continued the editorship for two years and four months, namely, up to April, 1862; but, as all readers will remember, he continued to write for it till he

died, the day before Christmas Day, in 1863. His last contribution was, I think, a paper written for and published in the November number, called, "*Strange to say on Club Paper*," in which he vindicated Lord Clyde from the accusation of having taken the club stationery home with him. It was not a great subject, for no one could or did believe that the Field-Marshal had been guilty of any meanness; but the handling of it has made it interesting, and his indignation has made it beautiful.

The magazine was a great success, but justice compels me to say that Thackeray was not a good editor. As he would have been an indifferent civil servant, an indifferent member of Parliament, so was he perfunctory as an editor. It has sometimes been thought well to select a popular literary man as an editor; first, because his name will attract, and then with an idea that he who can write well himself will be a competent judge of the writings of others. The first may sell a magazine, but will hardly make it good; and the second will not avail much, unless the editor so situated be patient enough to read what is sent to him. Of a magazine editor it is required that he should be patient, scrupulous, judicious, but above all things hard-hearted. I think it may be doubted whether Thackeray did bring himself to read the basketfuls of manuscripts with which he was deluged, but he probably did, sooner or later, read the touching little private notes by which they were accompanied,—the heartrending appeals, in which he was told that if this or the other little article could be accepted and paid for, a starving family might be saved from starvation for a month. He tells us how he felt on receiving such letters in one of his *Roundabout Papers*, which he calls "*Thorns in the cushion.*" "How am I to know," he says—"though to be sure I

begin to know now,—as I take the letters off the tray, which of those envelopes contains a real *bona fide* letter, and which a thorn? One of the best invitations this year I mistook for a thorn letter, and kept it without opening." Then he gives the sample of a thorn letter. It is from a governess with a poem, and with a prayer for insertion and payment. "We have known better days, sir. I have a sick and widowed mother to maintain, and little brothers and sisters who look to me." He could not stand this, and the money would be sent, out of his own pocket, though the poem might be—postponed, till happily it should be lost.

From such material a good editor could not be made. Nor, in truth, do I think that he did much of the editorial work. I had once made an arrangement, not with Thackeray, but with the proprietors, as to some little story. The story was sent back to me by Thackeray—rejected. *Virginibus puerisque!* That was the gist of his objection. There was a project in a gentleman's mind,—as told in my story,—to run away with a married woman! Thackeray's letter was very kind, very regretful,—full of apology for such treatment to such a contributor. But—*Virginibus puerisque!* I was quite sure that Thackeray had not taken the trouble to read the story himself. Some moral deputy had read it, and disapproving, no doubt properly, of the little project to which I have alluded, had incited the editor to use his authority. That Thackeray had suffered when he wrote it was easy to see, fearing that he was giving pain to one he would fain have pleased. I wrote him a long letter in return, as full of drollery as I knew how to make it. In four or five days there came a reply in the same spirit,—boiling over with fun. He had kept my letter by him, not

daring to open it,—as he says that he did with that eligible invitation. At last he had given it to one of his girls to examine,—to see whether the thorn would be too sharp, whether I had turned upon him with reproaches. A man so susceptible, so prone to work by fits and starts, so unmethodical, could not have been a good editor.

In 1862 he went into the new house which he had built for himself at Palace Green. I remember well, while this was still being built, how his friends used to discuss his imprudence in building it. Though he had done well with himself, and had made and was making a large income, was he entitled to live in a house the rent of which could not be counted at less than from five hundred to six hundred pounds a year? Before he had been there two years, he solved the question by dying,—when the house was sold for two thousand pounds more than it had cost. He himself, in speaking of his project, was wont to declare that he was laying out his money in the best way he could for the interest of his children;—and it turned out that he was right.

In 1863 he died in the house which he had built, and at the period of his death was writing a new novel in numbers, called *Denis Duval*. In *The Cornhill*, *The Adventures of Philip* had appeared. This new enterprise was destined for commencement on 1st January, 1864, and, though the writer was gone, it kept its promise, as far as it went. Three numbers, and what might probably have been intended for half of a fourth, appeared. It may be seen, therefore, that he by no means held to my theory, that the author should see the end of his work before the public sees the commencement. But neither did Dickens or Mrs. Gaskell, both of whom died with stories not completed, which, when they died, were in the

course of publication. All the evidence goes against the necessity of such precaution. Nevertheless, were I giving advice to a tiro in novel writing, I should recommend it.

With the last chapter of *Denis Duval* was published in the magazine a set of notes on the book, taken for the most part from Thackeray's own papers, and showing how much collateral work he had given to the fabrication of his novel. No doubt in preparing other tales, especially *Esmond*, a very large amount of such collateral labour was found necessary. He was a man who did very much of such work, delighting to deal in little historical incidents. They will be found in almost everything that he did, and I do not know that he was ever accused of gross mistakes. But I doubt whether on that account he should be called a laborious man. He could go down to Winchelsea, when writing about the little town, to see in which way the streets lay, and to provide himself with what we call local colouring. He could jot down the suggestions, as they came to his mind, of his future story. There was an irregularity in such work which was to his taste. His very notes would be delightful to read, partaking of the nature of pearls when prepared only for his own use. But he could not bring himself to sit at his desk and do an allotted task day after day. He accomplished what must be considered as quite a sufficient life's work. He had about twenty-five years for the purpose, and that which he has left is an ample produce for the time. Nevertheless he was a man of fits and starts, who, not having been in his early years drilled to method, never achieved it in his career.

He died on the day before Christmas Day, as has been said above, very suddenly, in his bed, early in the morning, in the fifty-third year of his life. To those who

saw him about in the world there seemed to be no reason why he should not continue his career for the next twenty years. But those who knew him were so well aware of his constant sufferings, that, though they expected no sudden catastrophe, they were hardly surprised when it came. His death was probably caused by those spasms of which he had complained ten years before, in his letter to Mr. Reed. On the last day but one of the year, a crowd of sorrowing friends stood over his grave as he was laid to rest in Kensal Green; and, as quickly afterwards as it could be executed, a bust to his memory was put up in Westminster Abbey. It is a fine work of art, by Marochetti; but, as a likeness, is, I think, less effective than that which was modelled, and then given to the Garrick Club, by Durham, and has lately been put into marble, and now stands in the upper vestibule of the club. Neither of them, in my opinion, give so accurate an idea of the man as a statuette in bronze, by Boehm, of which two or three copies were made. One of them is in my possession. It has been alleged, in reference to this, that there is something of a caricature in the lengthiness of the figure, in the two hands thrust into the trousers pockets, and in the protrusion of the chin. But this feeling has originated in the general idea that any face, or any figure, not made by the artist more beautiful or more graceful than the original is an injustice. The face must be smoother, the pose of the body must be more dignified, the proportions more perfect, than in the person represented, or satisfaction is not felt. Mr. Boehm has certainly not flattered, but, as far as my eye can judge, he has given the figure of the man exactly as he used to stand before us. I have a portrait of him in crayon, by Samuel Lawrence, as like, but hardly as natural.

A little before his death Thackeray told me that he had then succeeded in replacing the fortune which he had lost as a young man. He had, in fact, done better, for he left an income of seven hundred and fifty pounds behind him.

It has been said of Thackeray that he was a cynic. This has been said so generally, that the charge against him has become proverbial. This, stated barely, leaves one of two impressions on the mind, or perhaps the two together,—that this cynicism was natural to his character and came out in his life, or that it is the characteristic of his writings. Of the nature of his writings generally, I will speak in the last chapter of this little book. As to his personal character as a cynic, I must find room to quote the following first stanzas of the little poem which appeared to his memory in *Punch*, from the pen of Tom Taylor;

> He was a cynic! By his life all wrought
> Of generous acts, mild words, and gentle ways;
> His heart wide open to all kindly thought,
> His hand so quick to give, his tongue to praise!
>
> He was a cynic! You might read it writ
> In that broad brow, crowned with its silver hair;
> In those blue eyes, with childlike candour lit,
> In that sweet smile his lips were wont to wear!
>
> He was a cynic! By the love that clung
> About him from his children, friends, and kin;
> By the sharp pain light pen and gossip tongue
> Wrought in him, chafing the soft heart within!

The spirit and nature of the man have been caught here with absolute truth. A public man should of course be judged from his public work. If he wrote as a cynic,—a point which I will not discuss here,—it may be

fair that he who is to be known as a writer should be so called. But, as a man, I protest that it would be hard to find an individual farther removed from the character. Over and outside his fancy, which was the gift which made him so remarkable,—a certain feminine softness was the most remarkable trait about him. To give some immediate pleasure was the great delight of his life,—a sovereign to a schoolboy, gloves to a girl, a dinner to a man, a compliment to a woman. His charity was overflowing. His generosity excessive. I heard once a story of woe from a man who was the dear friend of both of us. The gentleman wanted a large sum of money instantly,—something under two thousand pounds,—had no natural friends who could provide it, but must go utterly to the wall without it. Pondering over this sad condition of things just revealed to me, I met Thackeray between the two mounted heroes at the Horse Guards, and told him the story. "Do you mean to say that I am to find two thousand pounds?" he said, angrily, with some expletives. I explained that I had not even suggested the doing of anything,—only that we might discuss the matter. Then there came over his face a peculiar smile, and a wink in his eye, and he whispered his suggestion, as though half ashamed of his meanness. "I'll go half," he said, "if anybody will do the rest." And he did go half, at a day or two's notice, though the gentleman was no more than simply a friend. I am glad to be able to add that the money was quickly repaid. I could tell various stories of the same kind, only that I lack space, and that they, if simply added one to the other, would lack interest.

He was no cynic, but he was a satirist, and could now and then be a satirist in conversation, hitting very hard when he did hit. When he was in America he met

at dinner a literary gentleman of high character, middle-aged, and most dignified deportment. The gentleman was one whose character and acquirements stood very high,—deservedly so,—but who, in society, had that air of wrapping his toga around him, which adds, or is supposed to add, many cubits to a man's height. But he had a broken nose. At dinner he talked much of the tender passion, and did so in a manner which stirred up Thackeray's feeling of the ridiculous. "What has the world come to," said Thackeray out loud to the table, "when two broken-nosed old fogies like you and me sit talking about love to each other!" The gentleman was astounded, and could only sit wrapping his toga in silent dismay for the rest of the evening. Thackeray then, as at other similar times, had no idea of giving pain, but when he saw a foible he put his foot upon it, and tried to stamp it out.

Such is my idea of the man whom many call a cynic, but whom I regard as one of the most soft-hearted of human beings, sweet as Charity itself, who went about the world dropping pearls, doing good, and never wilfully inflicting a wound.

CHAPTER II.

FRASER'S MAGAZINE AND PUNCH.

How Thackeray commenced his connection with *Fraser's Magazine* I am unable to say. We know how he had come to London with a view to a literary career, and that he had at one time made an attempt to earn his bread as a correspondent to a newspaper from Paris. It is probable that he became acquainted with the redoubtable Oliver Yorke, otherwise Dr. Maginn, or some of his staff, through the connection which he had thus opened with the press. He was not known, or at any rate he was unrecognised, by *Fraser* in January, 1835, in which month an amusing catalogue was given of the writers then employed, with portraits of them, all seated at a symposium. I can trace no article to his pen before November, 1837, when the *Yellowplush Correspondence* was commenced, though it is hardly probable that he should have commenced with a work of so much pretension. There had been published a volume called *My Book, or the Anatomy of Conduct*, by John Skelton, and a very absurd book no doubt it was. We may presume that it contained maxims on etiquette, and that it was intended to convey in print those invaluable lessons on deportment which, as Dickens has told us, were subsequently given by Mr. Turveydrop, in the academy kept by him for that

purpose. Thackeray took this as his foundation for the *Fashionable Fax and Polite Annygoats*, by Jeames Yellowplush, with which he commenced those repeated attacks against snobbism which he delighted to make through a considerable portion of his literary life. Oliver Yorke has himself added four or five pages of his own to Thackeray's lucubrations; and with the second, and some future numbers, there appeared illustrations by Thackeray himself, illustrations at this time not having been common with the magazine. From all this I gather that the author was already held in estimation by *Fraser's* confraternity. I remember well my own delight with *Yellowplush* at the time, and how I inquired who was the author. It was then that I first heard Thackeray's name.

The *Yellowplush Papers* were continued through nine numbers. No further reference was made to Mr. Skelton and his book beyond that given at the beginning of the first number, and the satire is only shown by the attempt made by Yellowplush, the footman, to give his ideas generally on the manners of noble life. The idea seems to be that a gentleman may, in heart and in action, be as vulgar as a footman. No doubt he may, but the chances are very much that he won't. But the virtue of the memoir does not consist in the lessons, but in the general drollery of the letters. The "orthogwaphy is inaccuwate," as a certain person says in the memoirs,—"so inaccuwate" as to take a positive study to "compwehend" it; but the joke, though old, is so handled as to be very amusing. Thackeray soon rushes away from his criticisms on snobbism to other matters. There are the details of a card-sharping enterprise, in which we cannot but feel that we recognise something of the author's own experiences in the misfortunes of Mr. Dawkins; there is the Earl of Crab's,

and then the first of those attacks which he was tempted to make on the absurdities of his brethren of letters, and the only one which now has the appearance of having been ill-natured. His first victims were Dr. Dionysius Lardner and Mr. Edward Bulwer Lytton, as he was then. We can surrender the doctor to the whip of the satirist; and for "Sawedwadgeorgeearliittnbulwig," as the novelist is made to call himself, we can well believe that he must himself have enjoyed the *Yellowplush Memoirs* if he ever re-read them in after life. The speech in which he is made to dissuade the footman from joining the world of letters is so good that I will venture to insert it: "Bullwig was violently affected; a tear stood in his glistening i. 'Yellowplush,' says he, seizing my hand, 'you *are* right. Quit not your present occupation; black boots, clean knives, wear plush all your life, but don't turn literary man. Look at me. I am the first novelist in Europe. I have ranged with eagle wings over the wide regions of literature, and perched on every eminence in its turn. I have gazed with eagle eyes on the sun of philosophy, and fathomed the mysterious depths of the human mind. All languages are familiar to me, all thoughts are known to me, all men understood by me. I have gathered wisdom from the honeyed lips of Plato, as we wandered in the gardens of the Academies; wisdom, too, from the mouth of Job Johnson, as we smoked our backy in Seven Dials. Such must be the studies, and such is the mission, in this world of the Poet-Philosopher. But the knowledge is only emptiness; the initiation is but misery; the initiated a man shunned and banned by his fellows. Oh!' said Bullwig, clasping his hands, and throwing his fine i's up to the chandelier, 'the curse of Pwomethus descends upon his wace. Wath and punishment pursue them from

genewation to genewation! Wo to genius, the heaven-sealer, the fire-stealer! Wo and thrice-bitter desolation! Earth is the wock on which Zeus, wemorseless, stwetches his withing wictim;—men, the vultures that feed and fatten on him. Ai, ai! it is agony eternal,—gwoaning and solitawy despair! And you, Yellowplush, would penetwate these mystewies; you would waise the awful veil, and stand in the twemendous Pwesence. Beware, as you value your peace, beware! Withdwaw, wash Neophyte! For heaven's sake! O for heaven's sake!' —Here he looked round with agony;—'give me a glass of bwandy-and-water, for this clawet is beginning to disagwee with me.'" It was thus that Thackeray began that vein of satire on his contemporaries of which it may be said that the older he grew the more amusing it was, and at the same time less likely to hurt the feelings of the author satirised.

The next tale of any length from Thackeray's pen, in the magazine, was that called *Catherine*, which is the story taken from the life of a wretched woman called Catherine Hayes. It is certainly not pleasant reading, and was not written with a pleasant purpose. It assumes to have come from the pen of Ikey Solomon, of Horse-monger Lane, and its object is to show how disgusting would be the records of thieves, cheats, and murderers if their doings and language were described according to their nature instead of being handled in such a way as to create sympathy, and therefore imitation. Bulwer's *Eugene Aram*, Harrison Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, and Dickens' Nancy were in his mind, and it was thus that he preached his sermon against the selection of such heroes and heroines by the novelists of the day. "Be it granted," he says, in his epilogue, "Solomon is dull; but

don't attack his morality. He humbly submits that, in his poem, no man shall mistake virtue for vice, no man shall allow a single sentiment of pity or admiration to enter his bosom for any character in the poem, it being from beginning to end a scene of unmixed rascality, performed by persons who never deviate into good feeling." The intention is intelligible enough, but such a story neither could have been written nor read,—certainly not written by Thackeray, nor read by the ordinary reader of a first-class magazine,—had he not been enabled to adorn it by infinite wit. Captain Brock, though a brave man, is certainly not described as an interesting or gallant soldier; but he is possessed of great resources. Captain Macshane, too, is a thorough blackguard; but he is one with a dash of loyalty about him, so that the reader can almost sympathise with him, and is tempted to say that Ikey Solomon has not quite kept his promise.

Catherine appeared in 1839 and 1840. In the latter of those years *The Shabby Genteel* story also came out. Then in 1841 there followed *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond*, illustrated by Samuel's cousin, Michael Angelo. But though so announced in *Fraser*, there were no illustrations, and those attached to the story in later editions are not taken from sketches by Thackeray. This, as far as I know, was the first use of the name Titmarsh, and seems to indicate some intention on the part of the author of creating a hoax as to two personages,—one the writer and the other the illustrator. If it were so he must soon have dropped the idea. In the last paragraph he has shaken off his cousin Michael. The main object of the story is to expose the villany of bubble companies, and the danger they run who venture to have dealings with city matters which they do not

understand. I cannot but think that he altered his mind and changed his purpose while he was writing it, actuated probably by that editorial monition as to its length.

In 1842 were commenced *The Confessions of George Fitz-Boodle*, which were continued into 1843. I do not think that they attracted much attention, or that they have become peculiarly popular since. They are supposed to contain the reminiscences of a younger son, who moans over his poverty, complains of womankind generally, laughs at the world all round, and intersperses his pages with one or two excellent ballads. I quote one, written for the sake of affording a parody, with the parody along with it, because the two together give so strong an example of the condition of Thackeray's mind in regard to literary products. The "humbug" of everything, the pretence, the falseness of affected sentiment, the remoteness of poetical pathos from the true condition of the average minds of men and women, struck him so strongly, that he sometimes allowed himself almost to feel,—or at any rate, to say,—that poetical expression, as being above nature, must be unnatural. He had declared to himself that all humbug was odious, and should be by him laughed down to the extent of his capacity. His Yellowplush, his Catherine Hayes, his Fitz-Boodle, his Barry Lyndon, and Becky Sharp, with many others of this kind, were all invented and treated for this purpose and after this fashion. I shall have to say more on the same subject when I come to *The Snob Papers*. In this instance he wrote a very pretty ballad, *The Willow Tree*,—so good that if left by itself it would create no idea of absurdity or extravagant pathos in the mind of the ordinary reader,—simply that he might render his own work absurd by his own parody.

THE WILLOW-TREE.

No. I.

Know ye the willow-tree,
Whose gray leaves quiver,
Whispering gloomily
To yon pale river?
Lady, at eventide
Wander not near it!
They say its branches hide
A sad lost spirit!

Once to the willow-tree
A maid came fearful,
Pale seemed her cheek to be,
Her blue eye tearful.
Soon as she saw the tree,
Her steps moved fleeter.
No one was there—ah me!—
No one to meet her!

Quick beat her heart to hear
The far bells' chime
Toll from the chapel-tower
The trysting-time.
But the red sun went down
In golden flame,
And though she looked around,
Yet no one came!

Presently came the night,
Sadly to greet her,—
Moon in her silver light,
Stars in their glitter.
Then sank the moon away
Under the billow.
Still wept the maid alone—
There by the willow!

THE WILLOW-TREE.

No. II.

Long by the willow-tree
Vainly they sought her,
Wild rang the mother's screams
O'er the gray water.
"Where is my lovely one?
Where is my daughter?

Rouse thee, sir constable—
Rouse thee and look.
Fisherman, bring your net,
Boatman, your hook.
Beat in the lily-beds,
Dive in the brook."

Vainly the constable
Shouted and called her.
Vainly the fisherman
Beat the green alder.
Vainly he threw the net.
Never it hauled her!

Mother beside the fire
Sat, her night-cap in;
Father in easychair,
Gloomily napping;
When at the window-sill
Came a light tapping.

And a pale countenance
Looked through the casement.
Loud beat the mother's heart,
Sick with amazement,
And at the vision which
Came to surprise her!
Shrieking in an agony—
"Lor'! it's Elizar!"

Through the long darkness,
By the stream rolling,
Hour after hour went on
Tolling and tolling.
Long was the darkness,
Lonely and stilly.
Shrill came the night wind,
Piercing and chilly.

Shrill blew the morning breeze,
Biting and cold.
Bleak peers the gray dawn
Over the wold!
Bleak over moor and stream
Looks the gray dawn,
Gray with dishevelled hair.
Still stands the willow there—
The maid is gone!

Domine, Domine!
Sing we a litany—
Sing for poor maiden-hearts
broken and weary;
Sing we a litany,
Wail we and weep we a
wild miserere!

Yes, 'twas Elizabeth;—
Yes, 'twas their girl;
Pale was her cheek, and her
Hair out of curl.
"Mother!" the loved one,
Blushing, exclaimed,
"Let not your innocent
Lizzy be blamed.

Yesterday, going to Aunt
Jones's to tea,
Mother, dear mother, I
Forgot the door-key!
And as the night was cold,
And the way steep,
Mrs. Jones kept me to
Breakfast and sleep."

Whether her pa and ma
Fully believed her,
That we shall never know.
Stern they received her;
And for the work of that
Cruel, though short, night,—
Sent her to bed without
Tea for a fortnight.

MORAL.

Hey diddle diddlety,
Cat and the fiddlety,
Maidens of England take
caution by she!
Let love and suicide
Never tempt you aside,
And always remember to take
the door-key!

Mr. George Fitz-Boodle gave his name to other narratives beyond his own *Confessions*. A series of stories was carried on by him in *Fraser*, called *Men's Wives*, containing three,

Ravenwing, *Mr. and Mrs. Frank Berry*, and *Dennis Hoggarty's Wife*. The first chapter in *Mr. and Mrs. Frank Berry* describes "The Fight at Slaughter House." Slaughter House, as Mr. Venables reminded us in the last chapter, was near Smithfield in London,—the school which afterwards became Grey Friars; and the fight between Biggs and Berry is the record of one which took place in the flesh when Thackeray was at the Charter House. But Mr. Fitz-Boodle's name was afterwards attached to a greater work than these, to a work so great that subsequent editors have thought him to be unworthy of the honour. In the January number, 1844, of *Fraser's Magazine*, are commenced the *Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*, and the authorship is attributed to Mr. Fitz-Boodle. The title given in the magazine was *The Luck of Barry Lyndon: a Romance of the last Century*. By Fitz-Boodle. In the collected edition of Thackeray's works the *Memoirs* are given as "Written by himself," and were, I presume, so brought out by Thackeray, after they had appeared in *Fraser*. Why Mr. George Fitz-Boodle should have been robbed of so great an honour I do not know.

In imagination, language, construction, and general literary capacity, Thackeray never did anything more remarkable than *Barry Lyndon*. I have quoted the words which he put into the mouth of Ikey Solomon, declaring that in the story which he has there told he has created nothing but disgust for the wicked characters he has produced, and that he has "used his humble endeavours to cause the public also to hate them." Here, in *Barry Lyndon*, he has, probably unconsciously, acted in direct opposition to his own principles. Barry Lyndon is as great a scoundrel as the mind of man ever conceived. He is one who might have taken as his motto Satan's

words; "Evil, be thou my good." And yet his story is so written that it is almost impossible not to entertain something of a friendly feeling for him. He tells his own adventures as a card-sharper, bully, and liar; as a heartless wretch, who had neither love nor gratitude in his composition; who had no sense even of loyalty; who regarded gambling as the highest occupation to which a man could devote himself, and fraud as always justified by success; a man possessed by all meannesses except cowardice. And the reader is so carried away by his frankness and energy as almost to rejoice when he succeeds, and to grieve with him when he is brought to the ground.

The man is perfectly satisfied as to the reasonableness, —I might almost say, as to the rectitude,—of his own conduct throughout. He is one of a decayed Irish family, that could boast of good blood. His father had obtained possession of the remnants of the property by turning Protestant, thus ousting the elder brother, who later on becomes his nephew's confederate in gambling. The elder brother is true to the old religion, and as the law stood in the last century, the younger brother, by changing his religion, was able to turn him out. Barry, when a boy, learns the slang and the gait of the debauched gentlemen of the day. He is specially proud of being a gentleman by birth and manners. He had been kidnapped, and made to serve as a common soldier, but boasts that he was at once fit for the occasion when enabled to show as a court gentleman. "I came to it at once," he says, "and as if I had never done anything else all my life. I had a gentleman to wait upon me, a French *friseur* to dress my hair of a morning. I knew the taste of chocolate as by intuition almost, and could distinguish

between the right Spanish and the French before I had been a week in my new position. I had rings on all my fingers and watches in both my fobs, canes, trinkets, and snuffboxes of all sorts. I had the finest natural taste for lace and china of any man I ever knew."

To dress well, to wear a sword with a grace, to carry away his plunder with affected indifference, and to appear to be equally easy when he loses his last ducat, to be agreeable to women, and to look like a gentleman,—these are his accomplishments. In one place he rises to the height of a grand professor in the art of gambling, and gives his lessons with almost a noble air. "Play grandly, honourably. Be not of course cast down at losing; but above all, be not eager at winning, as mean souls are." And he boasts of his accomplishments with so much eloquence as to make the reader sure that he believes in them. He is quite pathetic over himself, and can describe with heartrending words the evils that befall him when others use against him successfully any of the arts which he practises himself.

The marvel of the book is not so much that the hero should evidently think well of himself, as that the author should so tell his story as to appear to be altogether on the hero's side. In *Catherine*, the horrors described are most truly disgusting,—so much that the story, though very clever, is not pleasant reading. The *Memoirs of Barry Lyndon* are very pleasant to read. There is nothing to shock or disgust. The style of narrative is exactly that which might be used as to the exploits of a man whom the author intended to represent as deserving of sympathy and praise,—so that the reader is almost brought to sympathise. But I should be doing an injustice to Thackeray if I were to leave an impression that he had

taught lessons tending to evil practice, such as he supposed to have been left by *Jack Sheppard* or *Eugene Aram*. No one will be tempted to undertake the life of a *chevalier d'industrie* by reading the book, or be made to think that cheating at cards is either an agreeable or a profitable profession. The following is excellent as a tirade in favour of gambling, coming from Redmond de Balibari, as he came to be called during his adventures abroad, but it will hardly persuade anyone to be a gambler;

"We always played on parole with anybody,—any person, that is, of honour and noble lineage. We never pressed for our winnings, or declined to receive promissory notes in lieu of gold. But woe to the man who did not pay when the note became due! Redmond de Balibari was sure to wait upon him with his bill, and I promise you there were very few bad debts. On the contrary, gentlemen were grateful to us for our forbearance, and our character for honour stood unimpeached. In latter times, a vulgar national prejudice has chosen to cast a slur upon the character of men of honour engaged in the profession of play; but I speak of the good old days of Europe, before the cowardice of the French aristocracy (in the shameful revolution, which served them right) brought discredit upon our order. They cry fie now upon men engaged in play; but I should like to know how much more honourable *their* modes of livelihood are than ours. The broker of the Exchange, who bulls and bears, and buys and sells, and dabbles with lying loans, and trades upon state-secrets,—what is he but a gamester? The merchant who deals in teas and tallow, is he any better? His bales of dirty indigo are his dice, his cards come up every year instead of every ten minutes, and the sea is his

green-table. You call the profession of the law an honourable one, where a man will lie for any bidder;—lie down poverty for the sake of a fee from wealth; lie down right because wrong is in his brief. You call a doctor an honourable man,—a swindling quack who does not believe in the nostrums which he prescribes, and takes your guinea for whispering in your ear that it is a fine morning. And yet, forsooth, a gallant man, who sits him down before the baize and challenges all comers, his money against theirs, his fortune against theirs, is proscribed by your modern moral world! It is a conspiracy of the middle-class against gentlemen. It is only the shopkeeper cant which is to go down nowadays. I say that play was an institution of chivalry. It has been wrecked along with other privileges of men of birth. When Seingalt engaged a man for six-and-thirty hours without leaving the table, do you think he showed no courage? How have we had the best blood and the brightest eyes too, of Europe throbbing round the table, as I and my uncle have held the cards and the bank against some terrible player, who was matching some thousands out of his millions against our all, which was there on the baize! When we engaged that daring Alexis Kossloffsky, and won seven thousand louis on a single coup, had we lost we should have been beggars the next day; when *he* lost, he was only a village and a few hundred serfs in pawn the worse. When at Toeplitz the Duke of Courland brought fourteen lacqueys, each with four bags of florins, and challenged our bank to play against the sealed bags, what did we ask? 'Sir,' said we, 'we have but eighty thousand florins in bank, or two hundred thousand at three months. If your highness's bags do not contain more than eighty thousand we will meet you.' And we

did; and after eleven hours' play, in which our bank was at one time reduced to two hundred and three ducats, we won seventeen thousand florins of him. Is *this* not something like boldness? Does this profession not require skill, and perseverance, and bravery? Four crowned heads looked on at the game, and an imperial princess, when I turned up the ace of hearts and made Paroli, burst into tears. No man on the European Continent held a higher position than Redmond Barry then; and when the Duke of Courland lost he was pleased to say that we had won nobly. And so we had, and spent nobly what we won." This is very grand, and is put as an eloquent man would put it who really wished to defend gambling.

The rascal, of course, comes to a miserable end, but the tone of the narrative is continued throughout. He is brought to live at last with his old mother in the Fleet prison, on a wretched annuity of fifty pounds per annum, which she has saved out of the general wreck, and there he dies of delirium tremens. For an assumed tone of continued irony, maintained through the long memoir of a life, never becoming tedious, never unnatural, astounding us rather by its naturalness, I know nothing equal to *Barry Lyndon*.

As one reads, one sometimes is struck by a conviction that this or the other writer has thoroughly liked the work on which he is engaged. There is a gusto about his passages, a liveliness in the language, a spring in the motion of the words, an eagerness of description, a lilt, if I may so call it, in the progress of the narrative, which makes the reader feel that the author has himself greatly enjoyed what he has written. He has evidently gone on with his work without any sense of weariness, or doubt;

and the words have come readily to him. So it has been with *Barry Lyndon*. "My mind was filled full with those blackguards," Thackeray once said to a friend. It is easy enough to see that it was so. In the passage which I have above quoted, his mind was running over with the idea that a rascal might be so far gone in rascality as to be in love with his own trade.

This was the last of Thackeray's long stories in *Fraser*. I have given by no means a complete catalogue of his contributions to the magazine, but I have perhaps mentioned those which are best known. There were many short pieces which have now been collected in his works, such as *Little Travels and Roadside Sketches*, and the *Carmen Lilliense*, in which the poet is supposed to be detained at Lille by want of money. There are others which I think are not to be found in the collected works, such as a *Box of Novels by Titmarsh*, and *Titmarsh in the Picture Galleries*. After the name of Titmarsh had been once assumed it was generally used in the papers which he sent to *Fraser*.

Thackeray's connection with *Punch* began in 1843, and, as far as I can learn, *Miss Tickletoby's Lectures on English History* was his first contribution. They, however, have not been found worthy of a place in the collected edition. His short pieces during a long period of his life were so numerous that to have brought them all together would have weighted his more important works with too great an amount of extraneous matter. The same lady, Miss Tickletoby, gave a series of lectures. There was *The History of the next French Revolution*, and *The Wanderings of our Fat Contributor*,—the first of which is, and the latter is not, perpetuated in his works. Our old friend Jeames Yellowplush, or De la Pluche,—for

we cannot for a moment doubt that he is the same Jeames, —is very prolific, and as excellent in his orthography, his sense, and satire, as ever. These papers began with *The Lucky Speculator*. He lives in The Albany; he hires a brougham; and is devoted to Miss Emily Flimsey, the daughter of Sir George, who had been his master,—to the great injury of poor Maryanne, the fellow-servant who had loved him in his kitchen days. Then there follows that wonderful ballad, *Jeames of Backley Square*. Upon this he writes an angry letter to *Punch*, dated from his chambers in The Albany; "Has a reglar suscriber to your amusing paper, I beg leaf to state that I should never have done so had I supposed that it was your 'abbit to igspose the mistaries of privit life, and to hinger the delligit feelings of umble individyouls like myself." He writes in his own defence, both as to Maryanne and to the share-dealing by which he had made his fortune; and he ends with declaring his right to the position which he holds. "You are corrict in stating that I am of hancient Normin fam'ly. This is more than Peal can say, to whomb I applied for a barnetcy; but the primmier being of low igstraction, natrally stikles for his horder." And the letter is signed "Fitzjames De la Pluche." Then follows his diary, beginning with a description of the way in which he rushed into *Punch's* office, declaring his misfortunes, when losses had come upon him. "I wish to be paid for my contribewtions to your paper. Suckmstances is altered with me." Whereupon he gets a cheque upon Messrs. Pump and Aldgate, and has himself carried away to new speculations. He leaves his diary behind him, and *Punch* surreptitiously publishes it. There is much in the diary which comes from Thackeray's very heart. Who does not remember his indignation against

Lord Bareacres? "I gave the old humbug a few shares out of my own pocket. 'There, old Pride,' says I, 'I like to see you down on your knees to a footman. There, old Pomposity! Take fifty pounds. I like to see you come cringing and begging for it!' Whenever I see him in a very public place, I take my change for my money. I digg him in the ribbs, or clap his padded old shoulders. I call him 'Bareacres, my old brick,' and I see him wince. It does my 'art good." It does Thackeray's heart good to pour himself out in indignation against some imaginary Bareacres. He blows off his steam with such an eagerness that he forgets for a time, or nearly forgets, his cacography. Then there are "Jeames on Time Bargings," "Jeames on the Guage Question," "Mr. Jeames again." Of all our author's heroes Jeames is perhaps the most amusing. There is not much in that joke of bad spelling, and we should have been inclined to say beforehand, that Mrs. Malaprop had done it so well and so sufficiently, that no repetition of it would be received with great favour. Like other dishes, it depends upon the cooking. Jeames, with his "suckmstances," high or low, will be immortal.

There were *The Travels in London*, a long series of them; and then *Punch's Prize Novelists*, in which Thackeray imitates the language and plots of Bulwer, Disraeli, Charles Lever, G. P. R. James, Mrs. Gore, and Cooper, the American. They are all excellent; perhaps Codlingsby is the best. Mendoza, when he is fighting with the bargeman, or drinking with Codlingsby, or receiving Louis Philippe in his rooms, seems to have come direct from the pen of our Premier. Phil Fogerty's jump, and the younger and the elder horsemen, as they come riding into the story, one in his armour and the other with his feathers, have the very savour and tone of Lever and

James; but then the savour and the tone are not so piquant. I know nothing in the way of imitation to equal Codlingsby, if it be not The Tale of Drury Lane, by W. S. in the *Rejected Addresses*, of which it is said that Walter Scott declared that he must have written it himself. The scene between Dr. Franklin, Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, and Tatua, the chief of the Nose-rings, as told in *The Stars and Stripes*, is perfect in its way, but it fails as being a caricature of Cooper. The caricaturist has been carried away beyond and above his model, by his own sense of fun.

Of the ballads which appeared in *Punch* I will speak elsewhere, as I must give a separate short chapter to our author's power of versification; but I must say a word of *The Snob Papers*, which were at the time the most popular and the best known of all Thackeray's contributions to *Punch*. I think that perhaps they were more charming, more piquant, more apparently true, when they came out one after another in the periodical, than they are now as collected together. I think that one at a time would be better than many. And I think that the first half in the long list of snobs would have been more manifestly snobs to us than they are now with the second half of the list appended. In fact, there are too many of them, till the reader is driven to tell himself that the meaning of it all is that Adam's family is from first to last a family of snobs. "First," says Thackeray, in preface, "the world was made; then, as a matter of course, snobs; they existed for years and years, and were no more known than America. But presently,—ingens patebat tellus,—the people became darkly aware that there was such a race. Not above five-and-twenty years since, a name, an expressive monosyllable, arose to designate that case. That

name has spread over England like railroads subsequently; snobs are known and recognised throughout an empire on which I am given to understand the sun never sets. *Punch* appears at the right season to chronicle their history; and the individual comes forth to write that history in *Punch*.

"I have,—and for this gift I congratulate myself with a deep and abiding thankfulness,—an eye for a snob. If the truthful is the beautiful, it is beautiful to study even the snobbish;—to track snobs through history as certain little dogs in Hampshire hunt out truffles; to sink shafts in society, and come upon rich veins of snob-ore. Snobbishness is like Death, in a quotation from Horace, which I hope you never heard, 'beating with equal foot at poor men's doors, and kicking at the gates of emperors.' It is a great mistake to judge of snobs lightly, and think they exist among the lower classes merely. An immense percentage of snobs, I believe, is to be found in every rank of this mortal life. You must not judge hastily or vulgarly of snobs; to do so shows that you are yourself a snob. I myself have been taken for one."

The state of Thackeray's mind when he commenced his delineations of snobbery is here accurately depicted. Written, as these papers were, for *Punch*, and written, as they were, by Thackeray, it was a necessity that every idea put forth should be given as a joke, and that the satire on society in general should be wrapped up in burlesque absurdity. But not the less eager and serious was his intention. When he tells us, at the end of the first chapter, of a certain Colonel Snobley, whom he met at "Bagnigge Wells," as he says, and with whom he was so disgusted that he determined to drive the man out of the house, we are well aware that he had met an

offensive military gentleman,—probably at Tunbridge. Gentlemen thus offensive, even though tamely offensive, were peculiarly offensive to him. We presume, by what follows, that this gentleman, ignorantly,—for himself most unfortunately,—spoke of Publicōla. Thackeray was disgusted,—disgusted that such a name should be lugged into ordinary conversation at all, and then that a man should talk about a name with which he was so little acquainted as not to know how to pronounce it. The man was therefore a snob, and ought to be put down; in all which I think that Thackeray was unnecessarily hard on the man, and gave him too much importance.

So it was with him in his whole intercourse with snobs,—as he calls them. He saw something that was distasteful, and a man instantly became a snob in his estimation. "But you *can* draw," a man once said to him, there having been some discussion on the subject of Thackeray's art powers. The man meant no doubt to be civil, but meant also to imply that for the purpose needed the drawing was good enough, a matter on which he was competent to form an opinion. Thackeray instantly put the man down as a snob for flattering him. The little courtesies of the world and the little discourtesies became snobbish to him. A man could not wear his hat, or carry his umbrella, or mount his horse, without falling into some error of snobbism before his hypercritical eyes. St. Michael would have carried his armour amiss, and St. Cecilia have been snobbish as she twanged her harp.

I fancy that a policeman considers that every man in the street would be properly "run in," if only all the truth about the man had been known. The tinker thinks that every pot is unsound. The cobbler doubts the

stability of every shoe. So at last it grew to be the case with Thackeray. There was more hope that the city should be saved because of its ten just men, than for society, if society were to depend on ten who were not snobs. All this arose from the keenness of his vision into that which was really mean. But that keenness became so aggravated by the intenseness of his search that the slightest speck of dust became to his eyes as a foul stain. Publicōla, as we saw, damned one poor man to a wretched immortality, and another was called pitilessly over the coals, because he had mixed a grain of flattery with a bushel of truth. Thackeray tells us that he was born to hunt out snobs, as certain dogs are trained to find truffles. But we can imagine that a dog, very energetic at producing truffles, and not finding them as plentiful as his heart desired, might occasionally produce roots which were not genuine,—might be carried on in his energies till to his senses every fungus-root became a truffle. I think that there has been something of this with our author's snob-hunting, and that his zeal was at last greater than his discrimination.

The nature of the task which came upon him made this fault almost unavoidable. When a hit is made, say with a piece at a theatre, or with a set of illustrations, or with a series of papers on this or the other subject,—when something of this kind has suited the taste of the moment, and gratified the public, there is a natural inclination on the part of those who are interested to continue that which has been found to be good. It pays and it pleases, and it seems to suit everybody. Then it is continued usque ad nauseam. We see it in everything. When the king said he liked partridges, partridges were served to him every day. The world was pleased with certain

ridiculous portraits of its big men. The big men were soon used up, and the little men had to be added.

We can imagine that even *Punch* may occasionally be at a loss for subjects wherewith to delight its readers. In fact, *The Snob Papers* were too good to be brought to an end, and therefore there were forty-five of them. A dozen would have been better. As he himself says in his last paper, "for a mortal year we have been together flattering and abusing the human race." It was exactly that. Of course we know,—everybody always knows,—that a bad specimen of his order may be found in every division of society. There may be a snob king, a snob parson, a snob member of parliament, a snob grocer, tailor, goldsmith, and the like. But that is not what has been meant. We did not want a special satirist to tell us what we all knew before. Had snobbishness been divided for us into its various attributes and characteristics, rather than attributed to various classes, the end sought,—the exposure, namely, of the evil,—would have been better attained. The snobbishness of flattery, of falsehood, of cowardice, lying, time-serving, money-worship, would have been perhaps attacked to a better purpose than that of kings, priests, soldiers, merchants, or men of letters. The assault as made by Thackeray seems to have been made on the profession generally.

The paper on clerical snobs is intended to be essentially generous, and is ended by an allusion to certain old clerical friends which has a sweet tone of tenderness in it. "How should he who knows you, not respect you or your calling? May this pen never write a pennyworth again if it ever casts ridicule upon either." But in the meantime he has thrown his stone at the covetousness of bishops, because of certain Irish prelates who died rich many years before

he wrote. The insinuation is that bishops generally take more of the loaves and fishes than they ought, whereas the fact is that bishops' incomes are generally so insufficient for the requirements demanded of them, that a feeling prevails that a clergyman to be fit for a bishopric should have a private income. He attacks the snobbishness of the universities, showing us how one class of young men consists of fellow-commoners, who wear lace and drink wine with their meals, and another class consists of sizars, or servitors, who wear badges, as being poor, and are never allowed to take their food with their fellow-students. That arrangements fit for past times are not fit for these is true enough. Consequently they should gradually be changed; and from day to day are changed. But there is no snobbishness in this. Was the fellow-commoner a snob when he acted in accordance with the custom of his rank and standing? or the sizar who accepted aid in achieving that education which he could not have got without it? or the tutor of the college, who carried out the rules entrusted to him? There are two military snobs, Rag and Famish. One is a swindler and the other a debauched young idiot. No doubt they are both snobs, and one has been, while the other is, an officer. But there is,—I think, not an unfairness so much as an absence of intuition,—in attaching to soldiers especially two vices to which all classes are open. Rag was a gambling snob, and Famish a drunken snob,—but they were not specially military snobs. There is a chapter devoted to dinner-giving snobs, in which I think the doctrine laid down will not hold water, and therefore that the snobbism imputed is not proved. "Your usual style of meal," says the satirist—"that is plenteous, comfortable, and in its perfection,—should be that to which you welcome your

friends." Then there is something said about the "Brummagem plate pomp," and we are told that it is right that dukes should give grand dinners, but that we,—of the middle class,—should entertain our friends with the simplicity which is customary with us. In all this there is, I think, a mistake. The duke gives a grand dinner because he thinks his friends will like it, sitting down when alone with the duchess, we may suppose, with a retinue and grandeur less than that which is arrayed for gala occasions. So is it with Mr. Jones, who is no snob because he provides a costly dinner,—if he can afford it. He does it because he thinks his friends will like it. It may be that the grand dinner is a bore,—and that the leg of mutton with plenty of gravy and potatoes all hot, would be nicer. I generally prefer the leg of mutton myself. But I do not think that snobbery is involved in the other. A man, no doubt, may be a snob in giving a dinner. I am not a snob because for the occasion I eke out my own dozen silver forks with plated ware; but if I make believe that my plated ware is true silver, then I am a snob.

In that matter of association with our betters,—we will for the moment presume that gentlemen and ladies with titles or great wealth are our betters,—great and delicate questions arise as to what is snobbery, and what is not, in speaking of which Thackeray becomes very indignant, and explains the intensity of his feelings as thoroughly by a charming little picture as by his words. It is a picture of Queen Elizabeth as she is about to trample with disdain on the coat which that snob Raleigh is throwing for her use on the mud before her. This is intended to typify the low parasite nature of the Englishman which has been described in the previous page or two. "And of these calm moralists,"—it matters not for our present purpose

who were the moralists in question,—"is there one I wonder whose heart would not throb with pleasure if he could be seen walking arm-in-arm with a couple of dukes down Pall Mall? No; it is impossible, in our condition of society, not to be sometimes a snob." And again: "How should it be otherwise in a country where lordolatry is part of our creed, and where our children are brought up to respect the 'Peerage' as the Englishman's second Bible." Then follows the wonderfully graphic picture of Queen Elizabeth and Raleigh.

In all this Thackeray has been carried away from the truth by his hatred for a certain meanness of which there are no doubt examples enough. As for Raleigh, I think we have always sympathised with the young man, instead of despising him, because he felt on the impulse of the moment that nothing was too good for the woman and the queen combined. The idea of getting something in return for his coat could hardly have come so quick to him as that impulse in favour of royalty and womanhood. If one of us to-day should see the queen passing, would he not raise his hat, and assume, unconsciously, something of an altered demeanour because of his reverence for majesty? In doing so he would have no mean desire of getting anything. The throne and its occupant are to him honourable, and he honours them. There is surely no greater mistake than to suppose that reverence is snobbishness. I meet a great man in the street, and some chance having brought me to his knowledge, he stops and says a word to me. Am I a snob because I feel myself to be graced by his notice? Surely not. And if his acquaintance goes further and he asks me to dinner, am I not entitled so far to think well of myself because I have been found worthy of his society?

They who have raised themselves in the world, and they, too, whose position has enabled them to receive all that estimation can give, all that society can furnish, all that intercourse with the great can give, are more likely to be pleasant companions than they who have been less fortunate. That picture of two companion dukes in Pall Mall is too gorgeous for human eye to endure. A man would be scorched to cinders by so much light, as he would be crushed by a sack of sovereigns even though he might be allowed to have them if he could carry them away. But there can be no doubt that a peer taken at random as a companion would be preferable to a clerk from a counting-house,—taken at random. The clerk might turn out a scholar on your hands, and the peer no better than a poor spendthrift;—but the chances are the other way.

A tufthunter is a snob, a parasite is a snob, the man who allows the manhood within him to be awed by a coronet is a snob. The man who worships mere wealth is a snob. But so also is he who, in fear lest he should be called a snob, is afraid to seek the acquaintance,—or if it come to speak of the acquaintance,— of those whose acquaintance is manifestly desirable. In all this I feel that Thackeray was carried beyond the truth by his intense desire to put down what is mean.

It is in truth well for us all to know what constitutes snobbism, and I think that Thackeray, had he not been driven to dilution and dilatation, could have told us. If you will keep your hands from picking and stealing, and your tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering, you will not be a snob. The lesson seems to be simple, and perhaps a little trite, but if you look into it, it will be found to contain nearly all that is necessary.

But the excellence of each individual picture as it is drawn is not the less striking because there may be found some fault with the series as a whole. What can excel the telling of the story of Captain Shindy at his club,—which is, I must own, as true as it is graphic. Captain Shindy is a real snob. "'Look at it, sir; is it cooked? Smell it, sir. Is it meat fit for a gentleman?' he roars out to the steward, who stands trembling before him, and who in vain tells him that the Bishop of Bullocksmithy has just had three from the same loin." The telling as regards Captain Shindy is excellent, but the sidelong attack upon the episcopate is cruel. "All the waiters in the club are huddled round the captain's mutton-chop. He roars out the most horrible curses at John for not bringing the pickles. He utters the most dreadful oaths because Thomas has not arrived with the Harvey sauce. Peter comes tumbling with the water-jug over Jeames, who is bringing the 'glittering canisters with bread.'

* * * * *

"Poor Mrs. Shindy and the children are, meanwhile, in dingy lodgings somewhere, waited upon by a charity girl in pattens."

The visit to Castle Carabas, and the housekeeper's description of the wonders of the family mansion, is as good. "'The Side Entrance and 'All,' says the housekeeper. 'The halligator hover the mantelpiece was brought home by Hadmiral St. Michaels, when a capting with Lord Hanson. The harms on the cheers is the harms of the Carabas family. The great 'all is seventy feet in lenth, fifty-six in breath, and thirty-eight feet 'igh. The carvings of the chimlies, representing the

buth of Venus and 'Ercules and 'Eyelash, is by Van Chislum, the most famous sculpture of his hage and country. The ceiling, by Calimanco, represents Painting, Harchitecture, and Music,—the naked female figure with the barrel-organ,—introducing George, first Lord Carabas, to the Temple of the Muses. The winder ornaments is by Vanderputty. The floor is Patagonian marble; and the chandelier in the centre was presented to Lionel, second marquis, by Lewy the Sixteenth, whose 'ead was cut hoff in the French Revolution. We now henter the South Gallery," etc. etc. All of which is very good fun, with a dash of truth in it also as to the snobbery; —only in this it will be necessary to be quite sure where the snobbery lies. If my Lord Carabas has a "buth of Venus," beautiful for all eyes to see, there is no snobbery, only good-nature, in the showing it; nor is there snobbery in going to see it, if a beautiful "buth of Venus" has charms for you. If you merely want to see the inside of a lord's house, and the lord is puffed up with the pride of showing his, then there will be two snobs.

Of all those papers it may be said that each has that quality of a pearl about it which in the previous chapter I endeavoured to explain. In each some little point is made in excellent language, so as to charm by its neatness, incision, and drollery. But *The Snob Papers* had better be read separately, and not taken in the lump.

Thackeray ceased to write for *Punch* in 1852, either entirely or almost so.

CHAPTER III.

VANITY FAIR.

SOMETHING has been said, in the biographical chapter, of the way in which *Vanity Fair* was produced, and of the period in the author's life in which it was written. He had become famous,—to a limited extent,—by the exquisite nature of his contributions to periodicals; but he desired to do something larger, something greater, something, perhaps, less ephemeral. For though *Barry Lyndon* and others have not proved to be ephemeral, it was thus that he regarded them. In this spirit he went to work and wrote *Vanity Fair*.

It may be as well to speak first of the faults which were attributed to it. It was said that the good people were all fools, and that the clever people were all knaves. When the critics,—the talking critics as well as the writing critics,—began to discuss *Vanity Fair*, there had already grown up a feeling as to Thackeray as an author—that he was one who had taken up the business of castigating the vices of the world. Scott had dealt with the heroics, whether displayed in his Flora MacIvors or Meg Merrilieses, in his Ivanhoes or Ochiltrees. Miss Edgeworth had been moral; Miss Austen conventional; Bulwer had been poetical and sentimental; Marryat and Lever had been funny and pugnacious, always with a dash of gallantry,

displaying funny naval and funny military life; and Dickens had already become great in painting the virtues of the lower orders. But by all these some kind of virtue had been sung, though it might be only the virtue of riding a horse or fighting a duel. Even Eugene Aram and Jack Sheppard, with whom Thackeray found so much fault, were intended to be fine fellows, though they broke into houses and committed murders. The primary object of all those writers was to create an interest by exciting sympathy. To enhance our sympathy personages were introduced who were very vile indeed,—as Bucklaw, in the guise of a lover, to heighten our feelings for Ravenswood and Lucy; as Wild, as a thief-taker, to make us more anxious for the saving of Jack; as Ralph Nickleby, to pile up the pity for his niece Kate. But each of these novelists might have appropriately begun with an *Arma virumque cano*. The song was to be of something godlike,—even with a Peter Simple. With Thackeray it had been altogether different. Alas, alas! the meanness of human wishes; the poorness of human results! That had been his tone. There can be no doubt that the heroic had appeared contemptible to him, as being untrue. The girl who had deceived her papa and mamma seemed more probable to him than she who perished under the willow-tree from sheer love,—as given in the last chapter. Why sing songs that are false? Why tell of Lucy Ashtons and Kate Nicklebys, when pretty girls, let them be ever so beautiful, can be silly and sly? Why pour philosophy out of the mouth of a fashionable young gentleman like Pelham, seeing that young gentlemen of that sort rarely, or we may say never, talk after that fashion? Why make a housebreaker a gallant charming young fellow, the truth being

that housebreakers as a rule are as objectionable in their manners as they are in their morals? Thackeray's mind had in truth worked in this way, and he had become a satirist. That had been all very well for *Fraser* and *Punch*; but when his satire was continued through a long novel, in twenty-four parts, readers,—who do in truth like the heroic better than the wicked,—began to declare that this writer was no novelist, but only a cynic.

Thence the question arises what a novel should be,—which I will endeavour to discuss very shortly in a later chapter. But this special fault was certainly found with *Vanity Fair* at the time. Heroines should not only be beautiful, but should be endowed also with a quasi celestial grace,—grace of dignity, propriety, and reticence. A heroine should hardly want to be married, the arrangement being almost too mundane,—and, should she be brought to consent to undergo such bond, because of its acknowledged utility, it should be at some period so distant as hardly to present itself to the mind as a reality. Eating and drinking should be altogether indifferent to her, and her clothes should be picturesque rather than smart, and that from accident rather than design. Thackeray's Amelia does not at all come up to the description here given. She is proud of having a lover, constantly declaring to herself and to others that he is "the greatest and the best of men,"—whereas the young gentleman is, in truth, a very little man. She is not at all indifferent as to her finery, nor, as we see incidentally, to enjoying her suppers at Vauxhall. She is anxious to be married,—and as soon as possible. A hero too should be dignified and of a noble presence; a man who, though he may be as poor as Nicholas Nickleby, should nevertheless be beautiful on all

occasions, and never deficient in readiness, address, or self-assertion. *Vanity Fair* is specially declared by the author to be "a novel without a hero," and therefore we have hardly a right to complain of deficiency of heroic conduct in any of the male characters. But Captain Dobbin does become the hero, and is deficient. Why was he called Dobbin, except to make him ridiculous? Why is he so shamefully ugly, so shy, so awkward? Why was he the son of a grocer? Thackeray in so depicting him was determined to run counter to the recognised taste of novel readers. And then again there was the feeling of another great fault. Let there be the virtuous in a novel and let there be the vicious, the dignified and the undignified, the sublime and the ridiculous,—only let the virtuous, the dignified, and the sublime be in the ascendant. Edith Bellenden, and Lord Evandale, and Morton himself would be too stilted, were they not enlivened by Mause, and Cuddie, and Pound-text. But here, in this novel, the vicious and the absurd have been made to be of more importance than the good and the noble. Becky Sharp and Rawdon Crawley are the real heroine and hero of the story. It is with them that the reader is called upon to interest himself. It is of them that he will think when he is reading the book. It is by them that he will judge the book when he has read it. There was no doubt a feeling with the public that though satire may be very well in its place, it should not be made the backbone of a work so long and so important as this. A short story such as *Catherine* or *Barry Lyndon* might be pronounced to have been called for by the iniquities of an outside world; but this seemed to the readers to have been addressed almost to themselves. Now men and women like to be painted as

Titian would paint them, or Raffaelle,—not as Rembrandt, or even Rubens.

Whether the ideal or the real is the best form of a novel may be questioned, but there can be no doubt that as there are novelists who cannot descend from the bright heaven of the imagination to walk with their feet upon the earth, so there are others to whom it is not given to soar among clouds. The reader must please himself, and make his selection if he cannot enjoy both. There are many who are carried into a heaven of pathos by the woes of a Master of Ravenswood, who fail altogether to be touched by the enduring constancy of a Dobbin. There are others,—and I will not say but they may enjoy the keenest delight which literature can give,—who cannot employ their minds on fiction unless it be conveyed in poetry. With Thackeray it was essential that the representations made by him should be, to his own thinking, lifelike. A Dobbin seemed to him to be such a one as might probably be met with in the world, whereas to his thinking a Ravenswood was simply a creature of the imagination. He would have said of such, as we would say of female faces by Raffaelle, that women would like to be like them, but are not like them. Men might like to be like Ravenswood, and women may dream of men so formed and constituted, but such men do not exist. Dobbins do, and therefore Thackeray chose to write of a Dobbin.

So also of the preference given to Becky Sharp and to Rawdon Crawley. Thackeray thought that more can be done by exposing the vices than extolling the virtues of mankind. No doubt he had a more thorough belief in the one than in the other. The Dobbins he did encounter—seldom; the Rawdon Crawleys very often. He

saw around him so much that was mean! He was hurt so often by the little vanities of people! It was thus that he was driven to that overthoughtfulness about snobs of which I have spoken in the last chapter. It thus became natural to him to insist on the thing which he hated with unceasing assiduity, and only to break out now and again into a rapture of love for the true nobility which was dear to him,—as he did with the character of Captain Dobbin.

It must be added to all this that, before he has done with his snob or his knave, he will generally weave in some little trait of humanity by which the sinner shall be relieved from the absolute darkness of utter iniquity. He deals with no Varneys or Deputy-Shepherds, all villany and all lies, because the snobs and knaves he had seen had never been all snob or all knave. Even Shindy probably had some feeling for the poor woman he left at home. Rawdon Crawley loved his wicked wife dearly, and there were moments even with her in which some redeeming trait half reconciles her to the reader.

Such were the faults which were found in *Vanity Fair*; but though the faults were found freely, the book was read by all. Those who are old enough can well remember the effect which it had, and the welcome which was given to the different numbers as they appeared. Though the story is vague and wandering, clearly commenced without any idea of an ending, yet there is something in the telling which makes every portion of it perfect in itself. There are absurdities in it which would not be admitted to anyone who had not a peculiar gift of making even his absurdities delightful. No schoolgirl who ever lived would have thrown back her gift-book, as Rebecca did the "dixonary," out of the carriage window as she was taken

away from school. But who does not love that scene with which the novel commences? How could such a girl as Amelia Osborne have got herself into such society as that in which we see her at Vauxhall? But we forgive it all because of the telling. And then there is that crowning absurdity of Sir Pitt Crawley and his establishment.

I never could understand how Thackeray in his first serious attempt could have dared to subject himself and Sir Pitt Crawley to the critics of the time. Sir Pitt is a baronet, a man of large property, and in Parliament, to whom Becky Sharp goes as a governess at the end of a delightful visit with her friend Amelia Sedley, on leaving Miss Pinkerton's school. The Sedley carriage takes her to Sir Pitt's door. "When the bell was rung a head appeared between the interstices of the dining-room shutters, and the door was opened by a man in drab breeches and gaiters, with a dirty old coat, a foul old neckcloth lashed round his bristly neck, a shining bald head, a leering red face, a pair of twinkling gray eyes, and a mouth perpetually on the grin.

"'This Sir Pitt Crawley's?' says John from the box.

"'E'es,' says the man at the door with a nod.

"'Hand down these 'ere trunks there,' said John.

"'Hand 'em down yourself,' said the porter."

But John on the box declines to do this, as he cannot leave his horses.

"The bald-headed man, taking his hands out of his breeches' pockets, advanced on this summons, and throwing Miss Sharp's trunk over his shoulder, carried it into the house." Then Becky is shown into the house, and a

dismantled dining-room is described, into which she is led by the dirty man with the trunk.

Two kitchen chairs, and a round table, and an attenuated old poker and tongs, were, however, gathered round the fireplace, as was a saucepan over a feeble, sputtering fire. There was a bit of cheese and bread and a tin candlestick on the table, and a little black porter in a pint pot.

"Had your dinner, I suppose?" This was said by him of the bald head. "It is not too warm for you? Like a drop of beer?"

"Where is Sir Pitt Crawley?" said Miss Sharp majestically.

"He, he! *I'm* Sir Pitt Crawley. Rek'lect you owe me a pint for bringing down your luggage. He, he! ask Tinker if I ain't."

The lady addressed as Mrs. Tinker at this moment made her appearance, with a pipe and a paper of tobacco, for which she had been despatched a minute before Miss Sharp's arrival; and she handed the articles over to Sir Pitt, who had taken his seat by the fire.

"Where's the farden?" said he. "I gave you three-halfpence; where's the change, old Tinker?"

"There," replied Mrs. Tinker, flinging down the coin. "It's only baronets as cares about farthings."

Sir Pitt Crawley has always been to me a stretch of audacity which I have been unable to understand. But it has been accepted; and from this commencement of Sir Pitt Crawley have grown the wonderful characters of the Crawley family,—old Miss Crawley, the worldly, wicked, pleasure-loving aunt, the Rev. Bute Crawley and his wife, who are quite as worldly, the sanctimonious elder son, who in truth is not less so, and Rawdon, who ultimately becomes Becky's husband,—who is the bad hero of the book, as Dobbin is the good hero. They are admirable; but it is quite clear that Thackeray had known nothing of what was coming about them when he

caused Sir Pitt to eat his tripe with Mrs. Tinker in the London dining-room.

There is a double story running through the book, the parts of which are but lightly woven together, of which the former tells us the life and adventures of that singular young woman Becky Sharp, and the other the troubles and ultimate success of our noble hero Captain Dobbin. Though it be true that readers prefer, or pretend to prefer, the romantic to the common in their novels, and complain of pages which are defiled with that which is low, yet I find that the absurd, the ludicrous, and even the evil, leave more impression behind them than the grand, the beautiful, or even the good. Dominie Sampson, Dugald Dalgetty, and Bothwell are, I think, more remembered than Fergus MacIvor, than Ivanhoe himself, or Mr. Butler the minister. It certainly came to pass that, in spite of the critics, Becky Sharp became the first attraction in *Vanity Fair*. When we speak now of *Vanity Fair*, it is always to Becky that our thoughts recur. She has made a position for herself in the world of fiction, and is one of our established personages.

I have already said how she left school, throwing the "dixonary" out of the window, like dust from her feet, and was taken to spend a few halcyon weeks with her friend Amelia Sedley, at the Sedley mansion in Russell Square. There she meets a brother Sedley home from India,—the immortal Jos,—at whom she began to set her hitherto untried cap. Here we become acquainted both with the Sedley and with the Osborne families, with all their domestic affections and domestic snobbery, and have to confess that the snobbery is stronger than the affection. As we desire to love Amelia Sedley, we wish that the people around her were less vulgar or less selfish,

—especially we wish it in regard to that handsome young fellow, George Osborne, whom she loves with her whole heart. But with Jos Sedley we are inclined to be content, though he be fat, purse-proud, awkward, a drunkard, and a coward, because we do not want anything better for Becky. Becky does not want anything better for herself, because the man has money. She has been born a pauper. She knows herself to be but ill qualified to set up as a beauty,—though by dint of cleverness she does succeed in that afterwards. She has no advantages in regard to friends or family as she enters life. She must earn her bread for herself. Young as she is, she loves money, and has a great idea of the power of money. Therefore, though Jos is distasteful at all points, she instantly makes her attack. She fails, however, at any rate for the present. She never becomes his wife, but at last she succeeds in getting some of his money. But before that time comes she has many a suffering to endure, and many a triumph to enjoy.

She goes to Sir Pitt Crawley as governess for his second family, and is taken down to Queen's Crawley in the country. There her cleverness prevails, even with the baronet, of whom I have just given Thackeray's portrait. She keeps his accounts, and writes his letters, and helps him to save money; she reads with the elder sister books they ought not to have read; she flatters the sanctimonious son. In point of fact, she becomes all in all at Queen's Crawley, so that Sir Pitt himself falls in love with her,—for there is reason to think that Sir Pitt may soon become again a widower. But there also came down to the baronet's house, on an occasion of general entertaining, Captain Rawdon Crawley. Of course Becky sets her cap at him, and of course succeeds. She always

succeeds. Though she is only the governess, he insists upon dancing with her, to the neglect of all the young ladies of the neighbourhood. They continue to walk together by moonlight,—or starlight,—the great, heavy, stupid, half-tipsy dragoon, and the intriguing, covetous, altogether unprincipled young woman. And the two young people absolutely come to love one another in their way,—the heavy, stupid, fuddled dragoon, and the false, covetous, altogether unprincipled young woman.

The fat aunt Crawley is a maiden lady, very rich, and Becky quite succeeds in gaining the rich aunt by her wiles. The aunt becomes so fond of Becky down in the country, that when she has to return to her own house in town, sick from over-eating, she cannot be happy without taking Becky with her. So Becky is installed in the house in London, having been taken away abruptly from her pupils, to the great dismay of the old lady's long-established resident companion. They all fall in love with her; she makes herself so charming, she is so clever; she can even, by help of a little care in dressing, become so picturesque! As all this goes on, the reader feels what a great personage is Miss Rebecca Sharp.

Lady Crawley dies down in the country, while Becky is still staying with his sister, who will not part with her. Sir Pitt at once rushes up to town, before the funeral, looking for consolation where only he can find it. Becky brings him down word from his sister's room that the old lady is too ill to see him.

"So much the better," Sir Pitt answered; "I want to see you, Miss Sharp. I want you back at Queen's Crawley, miss," the baronet said. His eyes had such a strange look, and were fixed upon her so stedfastly that Rebecca Sharp began almost to

tremble. Then she half promises, talks about the dear children, and angles with the old man. "I tell you I want you," he says; "I'm going back to the vuneral, will you come back?—yes or no?"

"I daren't. I don't think—it wouldn't be right—to be alone—with you, sir," Becky said, seemingly in great agitation.

"I say again, I want you. I can't get on without you. I didn't see what it was till you went away. The house all goes wrong. It's not the same place. All my accounts has got muddled again. You must come back. Do come back. Dear Becky, do come."

"Come,—as what, sir?" Rebecca gasped out.

"Come as Lady Crawley, if you like. There, will that zatisfy you? Come back and be my wife. You're vit for it. Birth be hanged. You're as good a lady as ever I see. You've got more brains in your little vinger than any baronet's wife in the country. Will you come? Yes or no?" Rebecca is startled, but the old man goes on. "I'll make you happy; zee if I don't. You shall do what you like, spend what you like, and have it all your own way. I'll make you a settlement. I'll do everything regular. Look here," and the old man fell down on his knees and leered at her like a satyr.

But Rebecca, though she had been angling, angling for favour and love and power, had not expected this. For once in her life she loses her presence of mind, and exclaims: "Oh Sir Pitt; oh sir; I—I'm married already!" She has married Rawdon Crawley, Sir Pitt's younger son, Miss Crawley's favourite among those of her family who are looking for her money. But she keeps her secret for the present, and writes a charming letter to the Captain; "Dearest,—Something tells me that we shall conquer. You shall leave that odious regiment. Quit gaming, racing, and be a good boy, and we shall all live in Park Lane, and *ma tante* shall leave us all her money."

Ma tante's money has been in her mind all through, but yet she loves him.

"Suppose the old lady doesn't come to," Rawdon said to his little wife as they sat together in the snug little Brompton lodgings. She had been trying the new piano all the morning. The new gloves fitted her to a nicety. The new shawl became her wonderfully. The new rings glittered on her little hands, and the new watch ticked at her waist.

"*I'll* make your fortune," she said; and Delilah patted Samson's cheek.

"You can do anything," he said, kissing the little hand. "By Jove you can! and we'll drive down to the Star and Garter and dine, by Jove!"

They were neither of them quite heartless at that moment, nor did Rawdon ever become quite bad. Then follow the adventures of Becky as a married woman, through all of which there is a glimmer of love for her stupid husband, while it is the real purpose of her heart to get money how she may,—by her charms, by her wit, by her lies, by her readiness. She makes love to everyone,—even to her sanctimonious brother-in-law, who becomes Sir Pitt in his time,—and always succeeds. But in her love-making there is nothing of love. She gets hold of that well-remembered old reprobate, the Marquis of Steyne, who possesses the two valuable gifts of being very dissolute and very rich, and from him she obtains money and jewels to her heart's desire. The abominations of Lord Steyne are depicted in the strongest language of which *Vanity Fair* admits. The reader's hair stands almost on end in horror at the wickedness of the two wretches,—at her desire for money, sheer money; and his for wickedness, sheer wickedness. Then her husband finds her out, --poor Rawdon! who with all his faults and thick-

headed stupidity, has become absolutely entranced by the wiles of his little wife. He is carried off to a sponging-house, in order that he may be out of the way, and, on escaping unexpectedly from thraldom, finds the lord in his wife's drawing-room. Whereupon he thrashes the old lord, nearly killing him; takes away the plunder which he finds on his wife's person, and hurries away to seek assistance as to further revenge;—for he is determined to shoot the marquis, or to be shot. He goes to one Captain Macmurdo, who is to act as his second, and there he pours out his heart. "You don't know how fond I was of that one," Rawdon said, half-inarticulately. "Damme, I followed her like a footman! I gave up everything I had to her. I'm a beggar because I would marry her. By Jove, sir, I've pawned my own watch to get her anything she fancied. And she,—she's been making a purse for herself all the time, and grudged me a hundred pounds to get me out of quod!" His friend alleges that the wife may be innocent after all. "It may be so," Rawdon exclaimed sadly; "but this don't look very innocent!" And he showed the captain the thousand-pound note which he had found in Becky's pocketbook.

But the marquis can do better than fight; and Rawdon, in spite of his true love, can do better than follow the quarrel up to his own undoing. The marquis, on the spur of the moment, gets the lady's husband appointed governor of Coventry Island, with a salary of three thousand pounds a year; and poor Rawdon at last condescends to accept the appointment. He will not see his wife again, but he makes her an allowance out of his income.

In arranging all this, Thackeray is enabled to have a

side blow at the British way of distributing patronage,—for the favour of which he was afterwards himself a candidate. He quotes as follows from *The Royalist* newspaper: "We hear that the governorship"—of Coventry Island—"has been offered to Colonel Rawdon Crawley, C.B., a distinguished Waterloo officer. We need not only men of acknowledged bravery, but men of administrative talents to superintend the affairs of our colonies; and we have no doubt that the gentleman selected by the Colonial Office to fill the lamented vacancy which has occurred at Coventry Island, is admirably calculated for the post." The reader, however, is aware that the officer in question cannot write a sentence or speak two words correctly.

Our heroine's adventures are carried on much further, but they cannot be given here in detail. To the end she is the same,—utterly false, selfish, covetous, and successful. To have made such a woman really in love would have been a mistake. Her husband she likes best,—because he is, or was, her own. But there is no man so foul, so wicked, so unattractive, but that she can fawn over him for money and jewels. There are women to whom nothing is nasty, either in person, language, scenes, actions, or principle,—and Becky is one of them; and yet she is herself attractive. A most wonderful sketch, for the perpetration of which all Thackeray's power of combined indignation and humour was necessary!

The story of Amelia and her two lovers, George Osborne and Captain, or as he came afterwards to be, Major, and Colonel Dobbin, is less interesting, simply because goodness and eulogy are less exciting than wickedness and censure. Amelia is a true, honest-hearted, thoroughly English young woman, who loves her love

because he is grand,—to her eyes,—and loving him, loves him with all her heart. Readers have said that she is silly, only because she is not heroic. I do not know that she is more silly than many young ladies whom we who are old have loved in our youth, or than those whom our sons are loving at the present time. Readers complain of Amelia because she is absolutely true to nature. There are no Raffaellistic touches, no added graces, no divine romance. She is feminine all over, and British,—loving, true, thoroughly unselfish, yet with a taste for having things comfortable, forgiving, quite capable of jealousy, but prone to be appeased at once, at the first kiss; quite convinced that her lover, her husband, her children are the people in all the world to whom the greatest consideration is due. Such a one is sure to be the dupe of a Becky Sharp, should a Becky Sharp come in her way,—as is the case with so many sweet Amelias whom we have known. But in a matter of love she is sound enough and sensible enough,—and she is as true as steel. I know no trait in Amelia which a man would be ashamed to find in his own daughter.

She marries her George Osborne, who, to tell the truth of him, is but a poor kind of fellow, though he is a brave soldier. He thinks much of his own person, and is selfish. Thackeray puts in a touch or two here and there by which he is made to be odious. He would rather give a present to himself than to the girl who loved him. Nevertheless, when her father is ruined he marries her, and he fights bravely at Waterloo, and is killed. "No more firing was heard at Brussels. The pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and the city,—and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart."

Then follows the long courtship of Dobbin, the true hero,—he who has been the friend of George since their old school-days; who has lived with him and served him, and has also loved Amelia. But he has loved her,—as one man may love another,—solely with a view to the profit of his friend. He has known all along that George and Amelia have been engaged to each other as boy and girl. George would have neglected her, but Dobbin would not allow it. George would have jilted the girl who loved him, but Dobbin would not let him. He had nothing to get for himself, but loving her as he did, it was the work of his life to get for her all that she wanted.

George is shot at Waterloo, and then come fifteen years of widowhood,—fifteen years during which Becky is carrying on her manœuvres,—fifteen years during which Amelia cannot bring herself to accept the devotion of the old captain, who becomes at last a colonel. But at the end she is won. "The vessel is in port. He has got the prize he has been trying for all his life. The bird has come in at last. There it is, with its head on its shoulder, billing and cooing clean up to his heart, with soft outstretched fluttering wings. This is what he has asked for every day and hour for eighteen years. This is what he has pined after. Here it is,—the summit, the end, the last page of the third volume."

The reader as he closes the book has on his mind a strong conviction, the strongest possible conviction, that among men George is as weak and Dobbin as noble as any that he has met in literature; and that among women Amelia is as true and Becky as vile as any he has encountered. Of so much he will be conscious. In addition to this he will unconsciously have found that every page he has read will have been of interest to him. There has

been no padding, no longueurs; every bit will have had its weight with him. And he will find too at the end, if he will think of it—though readers, I fear, seldom think much of this in regard to books they have read—that the lesson taught in every page has been good. There may be details of evil painted so as to disgust,—painted almost too plainly,—but none painted so as to allure.

CHAPTER IV.

PENDENNIS AND THE NEWCOMES.

THE absence of the heroic was, in Thackeray, so palpable to Thackeray himself that in his original preface to *Pendennis*, when he began to be aware that his reputation was made, he tells his public what they may expect and what they may not, and makes his joking complaint of the readers of his time because they will not endure with patience the true picture of a natural man. "Even the gentlemen of our age," he says,—adding that the story of *Pendennis* is an attempt to describe one of them, just as he is,—"even those we cannot show as they are with the notorious selfishness of their time and their education. Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must shape him, and give him a certain conventional temper." Then he rebukes his audience because they will not listen to the truth. "You will not hear what moves in the real world, what passes in society, in the clubs, colleges, mess-rooms,—what is the life and talk of your sons." You want the Raffaellistic touch, or that of some painter of horrors equally removed from the truth. I tell you how a man really does act,—as did Fielding with Tom Jones,—but it does not satisfy you. You will not sympathise with this young man of

mine, this Pendennis, because he is neither angel nor imp. If it be so, let it be so. I will not paint for you angels or imps, because I do not see them. The young man of the day, whom I do see, and of whom I know the inside and the out thoroughly, him I have painted for you; and here he is, whether you like the picture or not. This is what Thackeray meant, and, having this in his mind, he produced *Pendennis*.

The object of a novel should be to instruct in morals while it amuses. I cannot think but that every novelist who has thought much of his art will have realised as much as that for himself. Whether this may best be done by the transcendental or by the commonplace is the question which it more behoves the reader than the author to answer, because the author may be fairly sure that he who can do the one will not, probably cannot, do the other. If a lad be only five feet high he does not try to enlist in the Guards. Thackeray complains that many ladies have "remonstrated and subscribers left him," because of his realistic tendency. Nevertheless he has gone on with his work, and, in *Pendennis*, has painted a young man as natural as Tom Jones. Had he expended himself in the attempt, he could not have drawn a Master of Ravenswood.

It has to be admitted that Pendennis is not a fine fellow. He is not as weak, as selfish, as untrustworthy as that George Osborne whom Amelia married in *Vanity Fair*; but nevertheless, he is weak, and selfish, and untrustworthy. He is not such a one as a father would wish to see his son, or a mother to welcome as a lover for her daughter. But then, fathers are so often doomed to find their sons not all that they wish, and mothers to see their girls falling in love with young men who are not

Paladins. In our individual lives we are contented to endure an admixture of evil, which we should resent if imputed to us in the general. We presume ourselves to be truth-speaking, noble in our sentiments, generous in our actions, modest and unselfish, chivalrous and devoted. But we forgive and pass over in silence a few delinquencies among ourselves. What boy at school ever is a coward,—in the general? What gentleman ever tells a lie? What young lady is greedy? We take it for granted, as though they were fixed rules in life, that our boys from our public schools look us in the face and are manly; that our gentlemen tell the truth as a matter of course; and that our young ladies are refined and unselfish. Thackeray is always protesting that it is not so, and that no good is to be done by blinking the truth. He knows that we have our little home experiences. Let us have the facts out, and mend what is bad if we can. This novel of *Pendennis* is one of his loudest protests to this effect.

I will not attempt to tell the story of Pendennis, how his mother loved him, how he first came to be brought up together with Laura Bell, how he thrashed the other boys when he was a boy, and how he fell in love with Miss Fotheringay, née Costigan, and was determined to marry her while he was still a hobbledehoy, how he went up to Boniface, that well-known college at Oxford, and there did no good, spending money which he had not got, and learning to gamble. The English gentleman, as we know, never lies; but Pendennis is not quite truthful; when the college tutor, thinking that he hears the rattling of dice, makes his way into Pen's room, Pen and his two companions are found with three *Homers* before them, and Pen asks the tutor with great gravity; "What was

the present condition of the river Scamander, and whether it was navigable or no?" He tells his mother that, during a certain vacation he must stay up and read, instead of coming home,—but, nevertheless, he goes up to London to amuse himself. The reader is soon made to understand that, though Pen may be a fine gentleman, he is not trustworthy. But he repents and comes home, and kisses his mother; only, alas! he will always be kissing somebody else also.

The story of the Amorys and the Claverings, and that wonderful French cook M. Alcide Mirobolant, forms one of those delightful digressions which Thackeray scatters through his novels rather than weaves into them. They generally have but little to do with the story itself, and are brought in only as giving scope for some incident to the real hero or heroine. But in this digression Pen is very much concerned indeed, for he is brought to the very verge of matrimony with that peculiarly disagreeable lady Miss Amory. He does escape at last, but only within a few pages of the end, when we are made unhappy by the lady's victory over that poor young sinner Foker, with whom we have all come to sympathise, in spite of his vulgarity and fast propensities. She would to the last fain have married Pen, in whom she believes, thinking that he would make a name for her. "Il me faut des émotions," says Blanche. Whereupon the author, as he leaves her, explains the nature of this Miss Amory's feelings. "For this young lady was not able to carry out any emotion to the full, but had a sham enthusiasm, a sham hatred, a sham love, a sham taste, a sham grief; each of which flared and shone very vehemently for an instant, but subsided and gave place to the next sham emotion." Thackeray, when he drew

this portrait, must certainly have had some special young lady in his view. But though we are made unhappy for Foker, Foker too escapes at last, and Blanche, with her emotions, marries that very doubtful nobleman Comte Montmorenci de Valentinois.

But all this of Miss Amory is but an episode. The purport of the story is the way in which the hero is made to enter upon the world, subject as he has been to the sweet teaching of his mother, and subject as he is made to be to the worldly lessons of his old uncle the major. Then he is ill, and nearly dies, and his mother comes up to nurse him. And there is his friend Warrington, of whose family down in Suffolk we shall have heard something when we have read *The Virginians*,—one I think of the finest characters, as it is certainly one of the most touching, that Thackeray ever drew. Warrington, and Pen's mother, and Laura are our hero's better angels,—angels so good as to make us wonder that a creature so weak should have had such angels about him; though we are driven to confess that their affection and loyalty for him are natural. There is a melancholy beneath the roughness of Warrington, and a feminine softness combined with the reticent manliness of the man, which have endeared him to readers beyond perhaps any character in the book. Major Pendennis has become immortal. Selfish, worldly, false, padded, caring altogether for things mean and poor in themselves; still the reader likes him. It is not quite all for himself. To Pen he is good,—to Pen who is the head of his family, and to come after him as the Pendennis of the day. To Pen and to Pen's mother he is beneficent after his lights. In whatever he undertakes it is so contrived that the reader shall in some degree sympathise with him. And so it is

with poor old Costigan, the drunken Irish captain, Miss Fotheringay's papa. He was not a pleasant person. "We have witnessed the déshabille of Major Pendennis," says our author; "will any one wish to be valet-de-chambre to our other hero, Costigan? It would seem that the captain, before issuing from his bedroom, scented himself with otto of whisky." Yet there is a kindliness about him which softens our hearts, though in truth he is very careful that the kindness shall always be shown to himself.

Among these people Pen makes his way to the end of the novel, coming near to shipwreck on various occasions, and always deserving the shipwreck which he has almost encountered. Then there will arise the question whether it might not have been better that he should be altogether shipwrecked, rather than housed comfortably with such a wife as Laura, and left to that enjoyment of happiness forever after, which is the normal heaven prepared for heroes and heroines who have done their work well through three volumes. It is almost the only instance in all Thackeray's works in which this state of bliss is reached. George Osborne, who is the beautiful lover in *Vanity Fair*, is killed almost before our eyes, on the field of battle, and we feel that Nemesis has with justice taken hold of him. Poor old Dobbin does marry the widow, after fifteen years of further service, when we know him to be a middle-aged man and her a middle-aged woman. That glorious Paradise of which I have spoken requires a freshness which can hardly be attributed to the second marriage of a widow who has been fifteen years mourning for her first husband. Clive Newcome, 'the first young man," if we may so call him, of the novel which I shall mention just now, is carried so far

beyond his matrimonial elysium that we are allowed to see too plainly how far from true may be those promises of hymeneal happiness forever after. The cares of married life have settled down heavily upon his young head before we leave him. He not only marries, but loses his wife, and is left a melancholy widower with his son. Esmond and Beatrix certainly reach no such elysium as that of which we are speaking. But Pen, who surely deserved a Nemesis, though perhaps not one so black as that demanded by George Osborne's delinquencies, is treated as though he had been passed through the fire, and had come out,—if not pure gold, still gold good enough for goldsmiths. "And what sort of a husband will this Pendennis be?" This is the question asked by the author himself at the end of the novel; feeling, no doubt, some hesitation as to the justice of what he had just done. "And what sort of a husband will this Pendennis be?" many a reader will ask, doubting the happiness of such a marriage and the future of Laura. The querists are referred to that lady herself, who, seeing his faults and wayward moods—seeing and owning that there are better men than he—loves him always with the most constant affection. The assertion could be made with perfect confidence, but is not to the purpose. That Laura's affection should be constant, no one would doubt; but more than that is wanted for happiness. How about Pendennis and his constancy?

The Newcomes, which I bracket in this chapter with *Pendennis*, was not written till after *Esmond*, and appeared between that novel and *The Virginians*, which was a sequel to *Esmond*. It is supposed to be edited by Pen, whose own adventures we have just completed, and

is commenced by that celebrated night passed by Colonel Newcome and his boy Clive at the Cave of Harmony, during which the colonel is at first so pleasantly received and so genially entertained, but from which he is at last banished, indignant at the iniquities of our drunken old friend Captain Costigan, with whom we had become intimate in Pen's own memoirs. The boy Clive is described as being probably about sixteen. At the end of the story he has run through the adventures of his early life, and is left a melancholy man, a widower, one who has suffered the extremity of misery from a step-mother, and who is wrapped up in the only son that is left to him,—as had been the case with his father at the beginning of the novel. *The Newcomes*, therefore, like Thackeray's other tales, is rather a slice from the biographical memoirs of a family, than a romance or novel in itself.

It is full of satire from the first to the last page. Every word of it seems to have been written to show how vile and poor a place this world is; how prone men are to deceive, how prone to be deceived. There is a scene in which "his Excellency Rummun Loll, otherwise his Highness Rummun Loll," is introduced to Colonel Newcome,—or rather presented,—for the two men had known each other before. All London was talking of Rummun Loll, taking him for an Indian prince, but the colonel, who had served in India, knew better. Rummun Loll was no more than a merchant, who had made a precarious fortune by doubtful means. All the girls, nevertheless, are running after his Excellency. "He's known to have two wives already in India," says Barnes Newcome; "but, by gad, for a settlement, I believe some of the girls here would marry him." We have a delightful

illustration of the London girls, with their bare necks and shoulders, sitting round Rummun Loll and worshipping him as he reposes on his low settee. There are a dozen of them so enchanted that the men who wish to get a sight of the Rummun are quite kept at a distance. This is satire on the women. A few pages on we come upon a clergyman who is no more real than Rummun Loll. The clergyman, Charles Honeyman, had married the colonel's sister and had lost his wife, and now the brothers-in-law meet. "'Poor, poor Emma!' exclaimed the ecclesiastic, casting his eyes towards the chandelier and passing a white cambric pocket-handkerchief gracefully before them. No man in London understood the ring business or the pocket-handkerchief business better, or smothered his emotion more beautifully. 'In the gayest moments, in the giddiest throng of fashion, the thoughts of the past will rise; the departed will be among us still. But this is not the strain wherewith to greet the friend newly arrived on our shores. How it rejoices me to behold you in old England.'" And so the satirist goes on with Mr. Honeyman the clergyman. Mr. Honeyman the clergyman has been already mentioned, in that extract made in our first chapter from *Lovel the Widower*. It was he who assisted another friend, "with his wheedling tongue," in inducing Thackeray to purchase that "neat little literary paper,"—called then *The Museum*, but which was in truth *The National Standard*. In describing Barnes Newcome, the colonel's relative, Thackeray in the same scene attacks the sharpness of the young men of business of the present day. There were, or were to be, some transactions with Rummun Loll, and Barnes Newcome, being in doubt, asks the colonel a question or two as to the certainty of the Rummun's money, much to the colonel's disgust. "The

young man of business had dropped his drawl or his languor, and was speaking quite unaffectedly, good-naturedly, and selfishly. Had you talked to him for a week you would not have made him understand the scorn and loathing with which the colonel regarded him. Here was a young fellow as keen as the oldest curmudgeon, —a lad with scarce a beard to his chin, that would pursue his bond as rigidly as Shylock." "Barnes Newcome never missed a church," he goes on, "or dressing for dinner. He never kept a tradesman waiting for his money. He seldom drank too much, and never was late for business, or huddled over his toilet, however brief his sleep or severe his headache. In a word, he was as scrupulously whited as any sepulchre in the whole bills of mortality." Thackeray had lately seen some Barnes Newcome when he wrote that.

It is all satire; but there is generally a touch of pathos even through the satire. It is satire when Miss Quigley, the governess in Park Street, falls in love with the old colonel after some dim fashion of her own. "When she is walking with her little charges in the Park, faint signals of welcome appear on her wan cheeks. She knows the dear colonel amidst a thousand horsemen." The colonel had drunk a glass of wine with her after his stately fashion, and the foolish old maid thinks too much of it. Then we are told how she knits purses for him, "as she sits alone in the schoolroom,—high up in that lone house, when the little ones are long since asleep,—before her dismal little tea-tray, and her little desk containing her mother's letters and her mementoes of home." Miss Quigley is an ass; but we are made to sympathise entirely with the ass, because of that morsel of pathos as to her mother's letters.

Clive Newcome, our hero, who is a second Pen, but a better fellow, is himself a satire on young men,—on young men who are idle and ambitious at the same time. He is a painter; but, instead of being proud of his art, is half ashamed of it,—because not being industrious he has not, while yet young, learned to excel. He is "doing" a portrait of Mrs. Pendennis, Laura, and thus speaks of his business. "No. 666,"—he is supposed to be quoting from the catalogue of the Royal Academy for the year,—"No. 666. Portrait of Joseph Muggins, Esq., Newcome, George Street. No. 979. Portrait of Mrs. Muggins on her gray pony, Newcome. No. 579. Portrait of Joseph Muggins, Esq.'s dog Toby, Newcome. This is what I am fit for. These are the victories I have set myself on achieving. Oh Mrs. Pendennis! isn't it humiliating? Why isn't there a war? Why haven't I a genius? There is a painter who lives hard by, and who begs me to come and look at his work. He is in the Muggins line too. He gets his canvases with a good light upon them; excludes the contemplation of other objects; stands beside his picture in an attitude himself; and thinks that he and they are masterpieces. Oh me, what drivelling wretches we are! Fame!—except that of just the one or two,—what's the use of it?" In all of which Thackeray is speaking his own feelings about himself as well as the world at large. What's the use of it all? Oh vanitas vanitatum! Oh vanity and vexation of spirit! "So Clive Newcome," he says afterwards, "lay on a bed of down and tossed and tumbled there. He went to fine dinners, and sat silent over them; rode fine horses, and black care jumped up behind the moody horseman." As I write this I have before me a letter from Thackeray to a

friend describing his own success when *Vanity Fair* was coming out, full of the same feeling. He is making money, but he spends it so fast that he never has any; and as for the opinions expressed on his books, he cares little for what he hears. There was always present to him a feeling of black care seated behind the horseman,—and would have been equally so had there been no real care present to him. A sardonic melancholy was the characteristic most common to him,—which, however, was relieved by an always present capacity for instant frolic. It was these attributes combined which made him of all satirists the most humorous, and of all humorists the most satirical. It was these that produced the Osbornes, the Dobbins, the Pens, the Clives, and the Newcomes, whom, when he loved them the most, he could not save himself from describing as mean and unworthy. A somewhat heroic hero of romance,—such a one, let us say, as Waverley, or Lovel in *The Antiquary*, or Morton in *Old Mortality*,—was revolting to him, as lacking those foibles which human nature seemed to him to demand.

The story ends with two sad tragedies, neither of which would have been demanded by the story, had not such sadness been agreeable to the author's own idiosyncrasy. The one is the ruin of the old colonel's fortunes, he having allowed himself to be enticed into bubble speculations; and the other is the loss of all happiness, and even comfort, to Clive the hero, by the abominations of his mother-in-law. The woman is so iniquitous, and so tremendous in her iniquities, that she rises to tragedy. Who does not know Mrs. Mack the Campaigner? Why at the end of his long story should Thackeray have married his hero to so lackadaisical a heroine as poor

little Rosey, or brought on the stage such a she-demon as Rosey's mother? But there is the Campaigner in all her vigour, a marvel of strength of composition,—one of the most vividly drawn characters in fiction;—but a woman so odious that one is induced to doubt whether she should have been depicted.

The other tragedy is altogether of a different kind, and though unnecessary to the story, and contrary to that practice of story-telling which seems to demand that calamities to those personages with whom we are to sympathise should not be brought in at the close of a work of fiction, is so beautifully told that no lover of Thackeray's work would be willing to part with it. The old colonel, as we have said, is ruined by speculation, and in his ruin is brought to accept the alms of the brotherhood of the Grey Friars. Then we are introduced to the Charter House, at which, as most of us know, there still exists a brotherhood of the kind. He dons the gown,—this old colonel, who had always been comfortable in his means, and latterly apparently rich,—and occupies the single room, and eats the doled bread, and among his poor brothers sits in the chapel of his order. The description is perhaps as fine as anything that Thackeray ever did. The gentleman is still the gentleman, with all the pride of gentry;—but not the less is he the humble bedesman, aware that he is living upon charity, not made to grovel by any sense of shame, but knowing that, though his normal pride may be left to him, an outward demeanour of humility is befitting.

And then he dies. "At the usual evening hour the chapel bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time,—and, just as the last

bell struck, a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little, and quickly said, 'Adsum,'—and fell back. It was the word we used at school when names were called; and, lo, he whose heart was as that of a little child had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of the Master!"

CHAPTER V.

ESMOND AND THE VIRGINIANS.

THE novel with which we are now going to deal I regard as the greatest work that Thackeray did. Though I do not hesitate to compare himself with himself, I will make no comparison between him and others; I therefore abstain from assigning to *Esmond* any special niche among prose fictions in the English language, but I rank it so high as to justify me in placing him among the small number of the highest class of English novelists. Much as I think of *Barry Lyndon* and *Vanity Fair*, I cannot quite say this of them; but, as a chain is not stronger than its weakest link, so is a poet, or a dramatist, or a novelist to be placed in no lower level than that which he has attained by his highest sustained flight. The excellence which has been reached here Thackeray achieved, without doubt, by giving a greater amount of forethought to the work he had before him than had been his wont. When we were young we used to be told, in our house at home, that "elbow-grease" was the one essential necessary to getting a tough piece of work well done. If a mahogany table was to be made to shine, it was elbow-grease that the operation needed. Forethought is the elbow-grease which a novelist,—or poet, or dramatist,—requires. It is not only his plot that has

to be turned and re-turned in his mind, not his plot chiefly, but he has to make himself sure of his situations, of his characters, of his effects, so that when the time comes for hitting the nail he may know where to hit it on the head,—so that he may himself understand the passion, the calmness, the virtues, the vices, the rewards and punishments which he means to explain to others,—so that his proportions shall be correct, and he be saved from the absurdity of devoting two-thirds of his book to the beginning, or two-thirds to the completion of his task. It is from want of this special labour, more frequently than from intellectual deficiency, that the tellers of stories fail so often to hit their nails on the head. To think of a story is much harder work than to write it. The author can sit down with the pen in his hand for a given time, and produce a certain number of words. That is comparatively easy, and if he have a conscience in regard to his task, work will be done regularly. But to think it over as you lie in bed, or walk about, or sit cosily over your fire, to turn it all in your thoughts, and make the things fit,—that requires elbow-grease of the mind. The arrangement of the words is as though you were walking simply along a road. The arrangement of your story is as though you were carrying a sack of flour while you walked. Fielding had carried his sack of flour before he wrote *Tom Jones*, and Scott his before he produced *Ivanhoe*. So had Thackeray done,—a very heavy sack of flour,—in creating *Esmond*. In *Vanity Fair*, in *Pendennis*, and in *The Newcomes*, there was more of that mere wandering in which no heavy burden was borne. The richness of the author's mind, the beauty of his language, his imagination and perception of character are all there. For that which was lovely he has shown his love,

and for the hateful his hatred; but, nevertheless, they are comparatively idle books. His only work, as far as I can judge them, in which there is no touch of idleness, is *Esmond*. *Barry Lyndon* is consecutive, and has the well-sustained purpose of exhibiting a finished rascal; but *Barry Lyndon* is not quite the same from beginning to end. All his full-fledged novels, except *Esmond*, contain rather strings of incidents and memoirs of individuals, than a completed story. But *Esmond* is a whole from beginning to end, with its tale well told, its purpose developed, its moral brought home,—and its nail hit well on the head and driven in.

I told Thackeray once that it was not only his best work, but so much the best, that there was none second to it. "That was what I intended," he said, "but I have failed. Nobody reads it. After all, what does it matter?" he went on after awhile. "If they like anything, one ought to be satisfied. After all, Esmond was a prig." Then he laughed and changed the subject, not caring to dwell on thoughts painful to him. The elbow-grease of thinking was always distasteful to him, and had no doubt been so when he conceived and carried out this work.

To the ordinary labour necessary for such a novel he added very much by his resolution to write it in a style different, not only from that which he had made his own, but from that also which belonged to the time. He had devoted himself to the reading of the literature of Queen Anne's reign, and having chosen to throw his story into that period, and to create in it personages who were to be peculiarly concerned with the period, he resolved to use as the vehicle for his story the forms of expression then prevalent. No one who has not tried it can understand

how great is the difficulty of mastering a phase of one's own language other than that which habit has made familiar. To write in another language, if the language be sufficiently known, is a much less arduous undertaking. The lad who attempts to write his essay in Ciceronian Latin struggles to achieve a style which is not indeed common to him, but is more common than any other he has become acquainted with in that tongue. But Thackeray in his work had always to remember his Swift, his Steele, and his Addison, and to forget at the same time the modes of expression which the day had adopted. Whether he asked advice on the subject, I do not know. But I feel sure that if he did he must have been counselled against it. Let my reader think what advice he would give to any writer on such a subject. Probably he asked no advice, and would have taken none. No doubt he found himself, at first imperceptibly, gliding into a phraseology which had attractions for his ear, and then probably was so charmed with the peculiarly masculine forms of sentences which thus became familiar to him, that he thought it would be almost as difficult to drop them altogether as altogether to assume the use of them. And if he could do so successfully, how great would be the assistance given to the local colouring which is needed for a novel in prose, the scene of which is thrown far back from the writer's period! Were I to write a poem about Cœur de Lion I should not mar my poem by using the simple language of the day; but if I write a prose story of the time, I cannot altogether avoid some attempt at far-away quaintnesses in language. To call a purse a "gypsire," and to begin your little speeches with "Marry come up," or to finish them with "Quotha," are but poor attempts. But even they have had their effect. Scott did the best he could with his

Cœur de Lion. When we look to it we find that it was but little; though in his hands it passed for much. "By my troth," said the knight, "thou hast sung well and heartily, and in high praise of thine order." We doubt whether he achieved any similarity to the language of the time; but still, even in the little which he attempted there was something of the picturesque. But how much more would be done if in very truth the whole language of a story could be thrown with correctness into the form of expression used at the time depicted?

It was this that Thackeray tried in his *Esmond*, and he has done it almost without a flaw. The time in question is near enough to us, and the literature sufficiently familiar to enable us to judge. Whether folk swore by their troth in the days of king Richard I. we do not know, but when we read Swift's letters, and Addison's papers, or Defoe's novels we do catch the veritable sounds of Queen Anne's age, and can say for ourselves whether Thackeray has caught them correctly or not. No reader can doubt that he has done so. Nor is the reader ever struck with the affectation of an assumed dialect. The words come as though they had been written naturally, —though not natural to the middle of the nineteenth century. It was a tour de force; and successful as such a tour de force so seldom is. But though Thackeray was successful in adopting the tone he wished to assume, he never quite succeeded, as far as my ear can judge, in altogether dropping it again.

And yet it has to be remembered that though *Esmond* deals with the times of Queen Anne, and "copies the language" of the time, as Thackeray himself says in the dedication, the story is not supposed to have been written till the reign of George II. Esmond in his

narrative speaks of Fielding and Hogarth, who did their best work under George II. The idea is that Henry Esmond, the hero, went out to Virginia after the events told, and there wrote the memoir in the form of an autobiography. The estate of Castlewood in Virginia had been given to the Esmond family by Charles I., and this Esmond, our hero, finding that expatriation would best suit both his domestic happiness and his political difficulties,—as the reader of the book will understand might be the case,—settles himself in the colony, and there writes the history of his early life. He retains the manners, and with the manners the language of his youth. He lives among his own people, a country gentleman with a broad domain, mixing but little with the world beyond, and remains an English gentleman of the time of Queen Anne. The story is continued in *The Virginians*, the name given to a record of two lads who were grandsons of Harry Esmond, whose names are Warrington. Before *The Virginians* appeared we had already become acquainted with a scion of that family, the friend of Arthur Pendennis, a younger son of Sir Miles Warrington, of Suffolk. Henry Esmond's daughter had in a previous generation married a younger son of the then baronet. This is mentioned now to show the way in which Thackeray's mind worked afterwards upon the details and characters which he had originated in *Esmond*.

It is not my purpose to tell the story here, but rather to explain the way in which it is written, to show how it differs from other stories, and thus to explain its effect. Harry Esmond, who tells the story, is of course the hero. There are two heroines who equally command our sympathy,—Lady Castlewood the wife of Harry's kinsman,

and her daughter Beatrix. Thackeray himself declared the man to be a prig, and he was not altogether wrong. Beatrix, with whom throughout the whole book he is in love, knew him well. "Shall I be frank with you, Harry," she says, when she is engaged to another suitor, "and say that if you had not been down on your knees and so humble, you might have fared better with me? A woman of my spirit, cousin, is to be won by gallantry, and not by sighs and rueful faces. All the time you are worshipping and singing hymns to me, I know very well I am no goddess." And again: "As for you, you want a woman to bring your slippers and cap, and to sit at your feet and cry, O caro, caro! O bravo! whilst you read your Shakespeares and Miltons and stuff." He was a prig, and the girl he loved knew him, and being quite of another way of thinking herself, would have nothing to say to him in the way of love. But without something of the aptitudes of a prig the character which the author intended could not have been drawn. There was to be courage,—military courage, —and that propensity to fighting which the tone of the age demanded in a finished gentleman. Esmond therefore is ready enough to use his sword. But at the same time he has to live as becomes one whose name is in some degree under a cloud; for though he be not in truth an illegitimate offshoot of the noble family which is his, and though he knows that he is not so, still he has to live as though he were. He becomes a soldier, and it was just then that our army was accustomed "to swear horribly in Flanders." But Esmond likes his books, and cannot swear or drink like other soldiers. Nevertheless he has a sort of liking for fast ways in others, knowing that such are the ways of a gallant cavalier. There is a

melancholy over his life which makes him always, to himself and to others, much older than his years. He is well aware that, being as he is, it is impossible that Beatrix should love him. Now and then there is a dash of lightness about him, as though he had taught himself in his philosophy that even sorrow may be borne with a smile,—as though there was something in him of the Stoic's doctrine, which made him feel that even disappointed love should not be seen to wound too deep. But still when he smiles, even when he indulges in some little pleasantry, there is that garb of melancholy over him which always makes a man a prig. But he is a gentleman from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. Thackeray had let the whole power of his intellect apply itself to a conception of the character of a gentleman. This man is brave, polished, gifted with that old-fashioned courtesy which ladies used to love, true as steel, loyal as faith himself, with a power of self-abnegation which astonishes the criticising reader when he finds such a virtue carried to such an extent without seeming to be unnatural. To draw the picture of a man and say that he is gifted with all the virtues is easy enough,—easy enough to describe him as performing all the virtues. The difficulty is to put your man on his legs, and make him move about, carrying his virtues with a natural gait, so that the reader shall feel that he is becoming acquainted with flesh and blood, not with a wooden figure. The virtues are all there with Henry Esmond, and the flesh and blood also, so that the reader believes in them. But still there is left a flavour of the character which Thackeray himself tasted when he called his hero a prig.

The two heroines, Lady Castlewood and Beatrix, are mother and daughter, of whom the former is in love with

Esmond, and the latter is loved by him. Fault has been found with the story, because of the unnatural rivalry,—because it has been felt that a mother's solicitude for her daughter should admit of no such juxtaposition. But the criticism has come, I think, from those who have failed to understand, not from those who have understood, the tale;—not because they have read it, but because they have not read it, and have only looked at it or heard of it. Lady Castlewood is perhaps ten years older than the boy Esmond, whom she first finds in her husband's house, and takes as a protégé; and from the moment in which she finds that he is in love with her own daughter, she does her best to bring about a marriage between them. Her husband is alive, and though he is a drunken brute,—after the manner of lords of that time,—she is thoroughly loyal to him. The little touches, of which the woman is herself altogether unconscious, that gradually turn a love for the boy into a love for the man, are told so delicately, that it is only at last that the reader perceives what has in truth happened to the woman. She is angry with him, grateful to him, careful over him, gradually conscious of all his worth, and of all that he does to her and hers, till at last her heart is unable to resist. But then she is a widow;—and Beatrix has declared that her ambition will not allow her to marry so humble a swain, and Esmond has become,—as he says of himself when he calls himself "an old gentleman,"—"the guardian of all the family," "fit to be the grandfather of you all."

The character of Lady Castlewood has required more delicacy in its manipulation than perhaps any other which Thackeray has drawn. There is a mixture in it of self-negation and of jealousy, of gratefulness of heart and of the weary thoughtfulness of age, of occasional spright-

liness with deep melancholy, of injustice with a thorough appreciation of the good around her, of personal weakness, —as shown always in her intercourse with her children, and of personal strength,—as displayed when she vindicates the position of her kinsman Henry to the Duke of Hamilton, who is about to marry Beatrix ;—a mixture which has required a master's hand to trace. These contradictions are essentially feminine. Perhaps it must be confessed that in the unreasonableness of the woman, the author has intended to bear more harshly on the sex than it deserves. But a true woman will forgive him, because of the truth of Lady Castlewood's heart. Her husband had been killed in a duel, and there were circumstances which had induced her at the moment to quarrel with Harry and to be unjust to him. He had been ill, and had gone away to the wars, and then she had learned the truth, and had been wretched enough. But when he comes back, and she sees him, by chance at first, as the anthem is being sung in the cathedral choir, as she is saying her prayers, her heart flows over with tenderness to him. "I knew you would come back," she said ; "and to-day, Henry, in the anthem when they sang it,—'When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream,'—I thought, yes, like them that dream,—them that dream. And then it went on, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy, and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come home again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' I looked up from the book and saw you. I was not surprised when I saw you. I knew you would come, my dear, and saw the gold sunshine round your head." And so it goes on, running into expressions of heartmelting tenderness. And yet she herself does not know that her own heart

is seeking his with all a woman's love. She is still willing that he should possess Beatrix. "I would call you my son," she says, "sooner than the greatest prince in Europe." But she warns him of the nature of her own girl. "'Tis for my poor Beatrix I tremble, whose headstrong will affrights me, whose jealous temper, and whose vanity no prayers of mine can cure." It is but very gradually that Esmond becomes aware of the truth. Indeed, he has not become altogether aware of it till the tale closes. The reader does not see that transfer of affection from the daughter to the mother which would fail to reach his sympathy. In the last page of the last chapter it is told that it is so,—that Esmond marries Lady Castlewood,—but it is not told till all the incidents of the story have been completed.

But of the three characters I have named, Beatrix is the one that has most strongly exercised the writer's powers, and will most interest the reader. As far as outward person is concerned she is very lovely,—so charming, that every man that comes near to her submits himself to her attractions and caprices. It is but rarely that a novelist can succeed in impressing his reader with a sense of female loveliness. The attempt is made so frequently,—comes so much as a matter of course in every novel that is written, and fails so much as a matter of course, that the reader does not feel the failure. There are things which we do not expect to have done for us in literature because they are done so seldom. Novelists are apt to describe the rural scenes among which their characters play their parts, but seldom leave any impression of the places described. Even in poetry how often does this occur? The words used are pretty, well chosen, perhaps musical to the ear, and in that way befitting; but unless

the spot has violent characteristics of its own, such as Burley's cave or the waterfall of Lodore, no striking portrait is left. Nor are we disappointed as we read, because we have not been taught to expect it to be otherwise. So it is with those word-painted portraits of women, which are so frequently given and so seldom convey any impression. Who has an idea of the outside look of Sophia Western, or Edith Bellenden, or even of Imogen, though Iachimo, who described her, was so good at words? A series of pictures,—illustrations,—as we have with Dickens' novels, and with Thackeray's, may leave an impression of a figure,—though even then not often of feminine beauty. But in this work Thackeray has succeeded in imbuing us with a sense of the outside loveliness of Beatrix by the mere force of words. We are not only told it, but we feel that she was such a one as a man cannot fail to covet, even when his judgment goes against his choice.

Here the judgment goes altogether against the choice. The girl grows up before us from her early youth till her twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth year, and becomes,—such as her mother described her,—one whose headlong will, whose jealousy, and whose vanity nothing could restrain. She has none of those soft foibles, half allied to virtues, by which weak women fall away into misery or perhaps distraction. She does not want to love or to be loved. She does not care to be fondled. She has no longing for caresses. She wants to be admired,—and to make use of the admiration she shall achieve for the material purposes of her life. She wishes to rise in the world; and her beauty is the sword with which she must open her oyster. As to her heart, it is a thing of which she becomes aware, only to assure herself that it must be laid aside and put

out of the question. Now and again Esmond touches it. She just feels that she has a heart to be touched. But she never has a doubt as to her conduct in that respect. She will not allow her dreams of ambition to be disturbed by such folly as love.

In all that there might be something, if not good and great, nevertheless grand, if her ambition, though worldly, had in it a touch of nobility. But this poor creature is made with her bleared blind eyes to fall into the very lowest depths of feminine ignobility. One lover comes after another. Harry Esmond is, of course, the lover with whom the reader interests himself. At last there comes a duke,—fifty years old, indeed, but with semi-royal appanages. As his wife she will become a duchess, with many diamonds, and be her Excellency. The man is stern, cold, and jealous; but she does not doubt for a moment. She is to be Duchess of Hamilton, and towers already in pride of place above her mother, and her kinsman lover, and all her belongings. The story here, with its little incidents of birth, and blood, and ignoble pride, and gratified ambition, with a dash of true feminine nobility on the part of the girl's mother, is such as to leave one with the impression that it has hardly been beaten in English prose fiction. Then, in the last moment, the duke is killed in a duel, and the news is brought to the girl by Esmond. She turns upon him and rebukes him harshly. Then she moves away, and feels in a moment that there is nothing left for her in this world, and that she can only throw herself upon devotion for consolation. "I am best in my own room and by myself," she said. Her eyes were quite dry, nor did Esmond ever see them otherwise, save once, in respect of that grief. She gave him a cold hand as she went out. "Thank you, brother," she said in a

low voice, and with a simplicity more touching than tears, "all that you have said is true and kind, and I will go away and will ask pardon."

But the consolation coming from devotion did not go far with such a one as her. We cannot rest on religion merely by saying that we will do so. Very speedily there comes consolation in another form. Queen Anne is on her deathbed, and a young Stuart prince appears upon the scene, of whom some loyal hearts dream that they can make a king. He is such as Stuarts were, and only walks across the novelist's canvas to show his folly and heartlessness. But there is a moment in which Beatrix thinks that she may rise in the world to the proud place of a royal mistress. That is her last ambition! That is her pride! That is to be her glory! The bleared eyes can see no clearer than that. But the mock prince passes away, and nothing but the disgrace of the wish remains.

Such is the story of *Esmond*, leaving with it, as does all Thackeray's work, a melancholy conviction of the vanity of all things human. *Vanitas vanitatum*, as he wrote on the pages of the French lady's album, and again in one of the earlier numbers of *The Cornhill Magazine*. With much that is picturesque, much that is droll, much that is valuable as being a correct picture of the period selected, the gist of the book is melancholy throughout. It ends with the promise of happiness to come, but that is contained merely in a concluding paragraph. The one woman, during the course of the story, becomes a widow, with a living love in which she has no hope, with children for whom her fears are almost stronger than her affection, who never can rally herself to happiness for a moment. The other, with all her beauty and all her brilliance, becomes what we have described,—and marries

at last her brother's tutor, who becomes a bishop by means of her intrigues. Esmond, the hero, who is compounded of all good gifts, after a childhood and youth tinged throughout with melancholy, vanishes from us, with the promise that he is to be rewarded by the hand of the mother of the girl he has loved.

And yet there is not a page in the book over which a thoughtful reader cannot pause with delight. The nature in it is true nature. Given a story thus sad, and persons thus situated, and it is thus that the details would follow each other, and thus that the people would conduct themselves. It was the tone of Thackeray's mind to turn away from the prospect of things joyful, and to see, —or believe that he saw,—in all human affairs, the seed of something base, of something which would be antagonistic to true contentment. All his snobs, and all his fools, and all his knaves, come from the same conviction. Is it not the doctrine on which our religion is founded,—though the sadness of it there is alleviated by the doubtful promise of a heaven?

> Though thrice a thousand years are passed
> Since David's son, the sad and splendid,
> The weary king ecclesiast
> Upon his awful tablets penned it.

So it was that Thackeray preached his sermon. But melancholy though it be, the lesson taught in *Esmond* is salutary from beginning to end. The sermon truly preached is that glory can only come from that which is truly glorious, and that the results of meanness end always in the mean. No girl will be taught to wish to shine like Beatrix, nor will any youth be made to think that to gain the love of such a one it can be worth his while to expend his energy or his heart.

Esmond was published in 1852. It was not till 1858, some time after he had returned from his lecturing tours, that he published the sequel called *The Virginians*. It was first brought out in twenty-four monthly numbers, and ran through the years 1858 and 1859, Messrs. Bradbury and Evans having been the publishers. It takes up by no means the story of *Esmond*, and hardly the characters. The twin lads, who are called the Virginians, and whose name is Warrington, are grandsons of Esmond and his wife Lady Castlewood. Their one daughter, born at the estate in Virginia, had married a Warrington, and the Virginians are the issue of that marriage. In the story, one is sent to England, there to make his way; and the other is for awhile supposed to have been killed by the Indians. How he was not killed, but after awhile comes again forward in the world of fiction, will be found in the story, which it is not our purpose to set forth here. The most interesting part of the narrative is that which tells us of the later fortunes of Madame Beatrix,—the Baroness Bernstein, —the lady who had in her youth been Beatrix Esmond, who had then condescended to become Mrs. Tasker, the tutor's wife, whence she rose to be the "lady" of a bishop, and, after the bishop had been put to rest under a load of marble, had become the baroness,—a rich old woman, courted by all her relatives because of her wealth.

In *The Virginians*, as a work of art, is discovered, more strongly than had shown itself yet in any of his works, that propensity to wandering which came to Thackeray because of his idleness. It is, I think, to be found in every book he ever wrote,—except *Esmond*; but is here more conspicuous than it had been in his earlier years. Though he can settle himself down to his pen and ink,—not always even to that without a struggle, but

to that with sufficient burst of energy to produce a large average amount of work,—he cannot settle himself down to the task of contriving a story. There have been those, —and they have not been bad judges of literature,—who have told me that they have best liked these vague narratives. The mind of the man has been clearly exhibited in them. In them he has spoken out his thoughts, and given the world to know his convictions, as well as could have been done in the carrying out any well-conducted plot. And though the narratives be vague, the characters are alive. In *The Virginians*, the two young men and their mother, and the other ladies with whom they have to deal, and especially their aunt, the Baroness Bernstein, are all alive. For desultory reading, for that picking up of a volume now and again which requires permission to forget the plot of a novel, this novel is admirably adapted. There is not a page of it vacant or dull. But he who takes it up to read as a whole, will find that it is the work of a desultory writer, to whom it is not unfrequently difficult to remember the incidents of his own narrative. "How good it is, even as it is!—but if he would have done his best for us, what might he not have done!" This, I think, is what we feel when we read *The Virginians*. The author's mind has in one way been active enough,—and powerful, as it always is; but he has been unable to fix it to an intended purpose, and has gone on from day to day furthering the difficulty he has intended to master, till the book, under the stress of circumstances,—demands for copy and the like,—has been completed before the difficulty has even in truth been encountered.

CHAPTER VI.

THACKERAY'S BURLESQUES.

As so much of Thackeray's writing partakes of the nature of burlesque, it would have been unnecessary to devote a separate chapter to the subject, were it not that there are among his tales two or three so exceedingly good of their kind, coming so entirely up to our idea of what a prose burlesque should be, that were I to omit to mention them I should pass over a distinctive portion of our author's work.

The volume called *Burlesques*, published in 1869, begins with the *Novels by Eminent Hands*, and *Jeames's Diary*, to which I have already alluded. It contains also *The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan*, *A Legend of the Rhine*, and *Rebecca and Rowena*. It is of these that I will now speak. *The History of the Next French Revolution* and *Cox's Diary*, with which the volume is concluded, are, according to my thinking, hardly equal to the others; nor are they so properly called burlesques.

Nor will I say much of Major Gahagan, though his adventures are very good fun. He is a warrior,—that is, of course,—and he is one in whose wonderful narrative all that distant India can produce in the way of boasting, is superadded to Ireland's best efforts in the same line. Baron Munchausen was nothing to him; and to the bare

and simple miracles of the baron is joined that humour without which Thackeray never tells any story. This is broad enough, no doubt, but is still humour;—as when the major tells us that he always kept in his own apartment a small store of gunpowder; "always keeping it under my bed, with a candle burning for fear of accidents." Or when he describes his courage; "I was running,—running as the brave stag before the hounds,—running, as I have done a great number of times in my life, when there was no help for it but a run." Then he tells us of his digestion. "Once in Spain I ate the leg of a horse, and was so eager to swallow this morsel, that I bolted the shoe as well as the hoof, and never felt the slightest inconvenience from either." He storms a citadel, and has only a snuff box given him for his reward. "Never mind," says Major Gahagan; "when they want me to storm a fort again, I shall know better." By which we perceive that the major remembered his Horace, and had in his mind the soldier who had lost his purse. But the major's adventures, excellent as they are, lack the continued interest which is attached to the two following stories.

Of what nature is *The Legend of the Rhine*, we learn from the commencement. "It was in the good old days of chivalry, when every mountain that bathes its shadow in the Rhine had its castle; not inhabited as now by a few rats and owls, nor covered with moss and wallflowers and funguses and creeping ivy. No, no; where the ivy now clusters there grew strong portcullis and bars of steel; where the wallflowers now quiver in the ramparts there were silken banners embroidered with wonderful heraldry; men-at-arms marched where now you shall only see a bank of moss or a hideous black champignon; and in place of the rats and owlets, I warrant me there were

ladies and knights to revel in the great halls, and to feast and dance, and to make love there." So that we know well beforehand of what kind will this story be. It will be pure romance,—burlesqued. "Ho seneschal, fill me a cup of hot liquor; put sugar in it, good fellow; yea, and a little hot water,—but very little, for my soul is sad as I think of those days and knights of old."

A knight is riding alone on his war-horse, with all his armour with him,—and his luggage. His rank is shown by the name on his portmanteau, and his former address and present destination by a card which was attached. It had run, "Count Ludwig de Hombourg, Jerusalem, but the name of the Holy City had been dashed out with the pen, and that of Godesberg substituted." "By St. Hugo of Katzenellenbogen," said the good knight shivering, "'tis colder here than at Damascus. Shall I be at Godesberg in time for dinner?" He has come to see his friend Count Karl, Margrave of Godesberg.

But at Godesberg everything is in distress and sorrow. There is a new inmate there, one Sir Gottfried, since whose arrival the knight of the castle has become a wretched man, having been taught to believe all evils of his wife, and of his child Otto, and a certain stranger, one Hildebrandt. Gottfried, we see with half an eye, has done it all. It is in vain that Ludwig de Hombourg tells his old friend Karl that this Gottfried is a thoroughly bad fellow, that he had been found to be a cardsharper in the Holy Land, and had been drummed out of his regiment. "'Twas but some silly quarrel over the wine-cup," says Karl. "Hugo de Brodenel would have no black bottle on the board." We think we can remember the quarrel of "Brodenel" and the black bottle, though so many things have taken place since that.

There is a festival in the castle, and Hildebrandt comes with the other guests. Then Ludwig's attention is called by poor Karl, the father, to a certain family likeness. Can it be that he is not the father of his own child? He is playing cards with his friend Ludwig when that traitor Gottfried comes and whispers to him, and makes an appointment. "I will be there too," thought Count Ludwig, the good Knight of Hombourg.

On the next morning, before the stranger knight had shaken off his slumbers, all had been found out and everything done. The lady has been sent to a convent and her son to a monastery. The knight of the castle has no comfort but in his friend Gottfried, a distant cousin who is to inherit everything. All this is told to Sir Ludwig,—who immediately takes steps to repair the mischief. "A cup of coffee straight," says he to the servitors. "Bid the cook pack me a sausage and bread in paper, and the groom saddle Streithengst. We have far to ride." So this redresser of wrongs starts off, leaving the Margrave in his grief.

Then there is a great fight between Sir Ludwig and Sir Gottfried, admirably told in the manner of the later chroniclers,—a hermit sitting by and describing everything almost as well as Rebecca did on the tower. Sir Ludwig being in the right, of course gains the day. But the escape of the fallen knight's horse is the cream of this chapter. "Away, ay, away!—away amid the green vineyards and golden cornfields; away up the steep mountains, where he frightened the eagles in their eyries; away down the clattering ravines, where the flashing cataracts tumble; away through the dark pine-forests, where the hungry wolves are howling; away over the dreary wolds, where the wild wind walks alone; away through the splashing

quagmires, where the will-o'-the wisp slunk frightened among the reeds; away through light and darkness, storm and sunshine; away by tower and town, highroad and hamlet. . . . Brave horse! gallant steed! snorting child of Araby! On went the horse, over mountains, rivers, turnpikes, applewomen; and never stopped until he reached a livery-stable in Cologne, where his master was accustomed to put him up!"

The conquered knight, Sir Gottfried, of course reveals the truth. This Hildebrandt is no more than the lady's brother,—as it happened a brother in disguise,—and hence the likeness. Wicked knights when they die always divulge their wicked secrets, and this knight Gottfried does so now. Sir Ludwig carries the news home to the afflicted husband and father; who of course instantly sends off messengers for his wife and son. The wife wo'n't come. All she wants is to have her dresses and jewels sent to her. Of so cruel a husband she has had enough. As for the son, he has jumped out of a boat on the Rhine, as he was being carried to his monastery, and was drowned!

But he was not drowned, but had only dived. "The gallant boy swam on beneath the water, never lifting his head for a single moment between Godesberg and Cologne; the distance being twenty-five or thirty miles."

Then he becomes an archer, dressed in green from head to foot. How it was is all told in the story; and he goes to shoot for a prize at the Castle of Adolf the Duke of Cleeves. On his way he shoots a raven marvellously,—almost as marvellously as did Robin Hood the twig in Ivanhoe. Then one of his companions is married, or nearly married, to the mysterious "Lady of Windeck,"—would have been married but for Otto, and that the bishop and dean, who

were dragged up from their long-ago graves to perform the ghostly ceremony, were prevented by the ill-timed mirth of a certain old canon of the church named Schidnischmidt. The reader has to read the name out loud before he recognises an old friend. But this of the Lady of Windeck is an episode.

How at the shooting-match, which of course ensued, Otto shot for and won the heart of a fair lady, the duke's daughter, need not be told here, nor how he quarrelled with the Rowski of Donnerblitz,—the hideous and sulky, but rich and powerful, nobleman who had come to take the hand, whether he could win the heart or not, of the daughter of the duke. It is all arranged according to the proper and romantic order. Otto, though he enlists in the duke's archer-guard as simple soldier, contrives to fight with the Rowski de Donnerblitz, Margrave of Eulenschrenkenstein, and of course kills him. "'Yield, yield, Sir Rowski!' shouted he in a calm voice. A blow dealt madly at his head was the reply. It was the last blow that the count of Eulenschrenkenstein ever struck in battle. The curse was on his lips as the crashing steel descended into his brain and split it in two. He rolled like a dog from his horse, his enemy's knee was in a moment on his chest, and the dagger of mercy at his throat, as the knight once more called upon him to yield." The knight was of course the archer who had come forward as an unknown champion, and had touched the Rowski's shield with the point of his lance. For this story, as well as the rest, is a burlesque on our dear old favourite Ivanhoe.

That everything goes right at last, that the wife comes back from her monastery, and joins her jealous husband, and that the duke's daughter has always, in truth, known

that the poor archer was a noble knight,—these things are all matters of course.

But the best of the three burlesques is *Rebecca and Rowena, or A Romance upon Romance*, which I need not tell my readers is a continuation of *Ivanhoe*. Of this burlesque it is the peculiar characteristic that, while it has been written to ridicule the persons and the incidents of that perhaps the most favourite novel in the English language, it has been so written that it would not have offended the author had he lived to read it, nor does it disgust or annoy those who most love the original. There is not a word in it having an intention to belittle Scott. It has sprung from the genuine humour created in Thackeray's mind by his aspect of the romantic. We remember how reticent, how dignified was Rowena,—how cold we perhaps thought her, whether there was so little of that billing and cooing, that kissing and squeezing, between her and Ivanhoe which we used to think necessary to lovers' blisses. And there was left too on our minds, an idea that Ivanhoe had liked the Jewess almost as well as Rowena, and that Rowena might possibly have become jealous. Thackeray's mind at once went to work and pictured to him a Rowena such as such a woman might become after marriage; and as Ivanhoe was of a melancholy nature and apt to be hipped, and grave, and silent, as a matter of course Thackeray presumes him to have been henpecked after his marriage.

Our dear Wamba disturbs his mistress in some devotional conversation with her chaplain, and the stern lady orders that the fool shall have three-dozen lashes. "I got you out of Front de Bœuf's castle," said poor Wamba, piteously, appealing to Sir Wilfrid of Ivanhoe, "and canst thou not save me from the lash?"

"Yes; from Front de Bœuf's castle, *when you were*

locked up with the Jewess in the tower!" said Rowena, haughtily replying to the timid appeal of her husband. "Gurth, give him four-dozen,"—and this was all poor Wamba got by applying for the mediation of his master. Then the satirist moralises; "Did you ever know a right-minded woman pardon another for being handsomer and more love-worthy than herself?" Rowena is "always flinging Rebecca into Ivanhoe's teeth;" and altogether life at Rotherwood, as described by the later chronicles, is not very happy even when most domestic. Ivanhoe becomes sad and moody. He takes to drinking, and his lady does not forget to tell him of it. "Ah dear axe!" he exclaims, apostrophising his weapon, "ah gentle steel! that was a merry time when I sent thee crashing into the pate of the Emir Abdul Melek!" There was nothing left to him but his memories; and "in a word, his life was intolerable." So he determines that he will go and look after king Richard, who of course was wandering abroad. He anticipates a little difficulty with his wife; but she is only too happy to let him go, comforting herself with the idea that Athelstane will look after her. So her husband starts on his journey. "Then Ivanhoe's trumpet blew. Then Rowena waved her pocket-handkerchief. Then the household gave a shout. Then the pursuivant of the good knight, Sir Wilfrid the Crusader, flung out his banner,—which was argent, a gules cramoisy with three Moors impaled,—then Wamba gave a lash on his mule's haunch, and Ivanhoe, heaving a great sigh, turned the tail of his war-horse upon the castle of his fathers."

Ivanhoe finds Cœur de Leon besieging the Castle of Chalons, and there they both do wondrous deeds, Ivanhoe always surpassing the king. The jealousy of

the courtiers, the ingratitude of the king, and the melancholy of the knight, who is never comforted except when he has slaughtered some hundreds, are delightful. Roger de Backbite and Peter de Toadhole are intended to be quite real. Then his majesty sings, passing off as his own, a song of Charles Lever's. Sir Wilfrid declares the truth, and twits the king with his falsehood, whereupon he has the guitar thrown at his head for his pains. He catches the guitar, however, gracefully in his left hand, and sings his own immortal ballad of *King Canute*,—than which Thackeray never did anything better.

"Might I stay the sun above us, good Sir Bishop?" Canute cried;
"Could I bid the silver moon to pause upon her heavenly ride?
If the moon obeys my orders, sure I can command the tide.

Will the advancing waves obey me, Bishop, if I make the sign?"
Said the bishop, bowing lowly; "Land and sea, my lord, are thine."
Canute turned towards the ocean; "Back," he said, "thou foaming brine."

But the sullen ocean answered with a louder deeper roar,
And the rapid waves drew nearer, falling, sounding on the shore;
Back the keeper and the bishop, back the king and courtiers bore.

We must go to the book to look at the picture of the king as he is killing the youngest of the sons of the Count of Chalons. Those illustrations of Doyle's are admirable. The size of the king's head, and the size of his battle-axe as contrasted with the size of the child, are burlesque all over. But the king has been wounded by a bolt from the bow of Sir Bertrand de Gourdon while he

is slaughtering the infant, and there is an end of him. Ivanhoe, too, is killed at the siege,—Sir Roger de Backbite having stabbed him in the back during the scene. Had he not been then killed, his widow Rowena could not have married Athelstane, which she soon did after hearing the sad news; nor could he have had that celebrated epitaph in Latin and English;

> Hic est Guilfridus, belli dum vixit avidus.
> Cum gladeo et lancea Normannia et quoque Francia
> Verbera dura dabat. Per Turcos multum equitabat.
> Guilbertum occidit;—atque Hyerosolyma vidit.
> Heu! nunc sub fossa sunt tanti militis ossa.
> Uxor Athelstani est conjux castissima Thani.[1]

The translation we are told was by Wamba;

Under the stone you behold,
Buried and coffined and cold,
Lieth Sir Wilfrid the Bold.

Always he marched in advance,
Warring in Flanders and France,
Doughty with sword and with lance.

Famous in Saracen fight,
Rode in his youth, the Good Knight,
Scattering Paynims in flight.

Brian, the Templar untrue,
Fairly in tourney he slew;
Saw Hierusalem too.

Now he is buried and gone,
Lying beneath the gray stone.
Where shall you find such a one?

Long time his widow deplored,
Weeping, the fate of her lord,
Sadly cut off by the sword.

When she was eased of her pain,
Came the good lord Athelstane,
When her ladyship married again.

[1] I doubt that Thackeray did not write the Latin epitaph, but I hardly dare suggest the name of any author. The "vixit avidus" is quite worthy of Thackeray; but had he tried his hand at such mode of expression he would have done more of it. I should like to know whether he had been in company with Father Prout at the time.

The next chapter begins naturally as follows; "I trust nobody will suppose, from the events described in the last chapter, that our friend Ivanhoe is really dead." He is of course cured of his wounds, though they take six years in the curing. And then he makes his way back to Rotherwood, in a friar's disguise, much as he did on that former occasion when we first met him, and there is received by Athelstane and Rowena,—and their boy!—while Wamba sings him a song:

> Then you know the worth of a lass,
> Once you have come to forty year!

No one, of course, but Wamba knows Ivanhoe, who roams about the country, melancholy,—as he of course would be,—charitable,—as he perhaps might be,—for we are specially told that he had a large fortune and nothing to do with it, and slaying robbers wherever he met them;—but sad at heart all the time. Then there comes a little burst of the author's own feelings, while he is burlesquing. "Ah my dear friends and British public, are there not others who are melancholy under a mask of gaiety, and who in the midst of crowds are lonely? Liston was a most melancholy man; Grimaldi had feelings; and then others I wot of. But psha!—let us have the next chapter." In all of which there was a touch of earnestness.

Ivanhoe's griefs were enhanced by the wickedness of king John, under whom he would not serve. "It was Sir Wilfrid of Ivanhoe, I need scarcely say, who got the Barons of England to league together and extort from the king that famous instrument and palladium of our liberties, at present in the British Museum, Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury,—The Magna Charta." Athelstane also quarrels with the king, whose orders he disobeys, and Rotherwood is attacked by the royal army. No one was

of real service in the way of fighting except Ivanhoe,—and how could he take up that cause? "No; be hanged to me," said the knight bitterly. "This is a quarrel in which I can't interfere. Common politeness forbids. Let yonder ale-swilling Athelstane defend his,—ha, ha!—*wife*; and my Lady Rowena guard her,—ha, ha!—*son!*" and he laughed wildly and madly.

But Athelstane is killed,—this time in earnest,—and then Ivanhoe rushes to the rescue. He finds Gurth dead at the park-lodge, and though he is all alone,—having outridden his followers,—he rushes up the chestnut avenue to the house, which is being attacked. "An Ivanhoe! an Ivanhoe!" he bellowed out with a shout that overcame all the din of battle;—"Notre Dame à la recousse?" and to hurl his lance through the midriff of Reginald de Bracy, who was commanding the assault,—who fell howling with anguish,—to wave his battle-axe over his own head, and to cut off those of thirteen men-at-arms, was the work of an instant. "An Ivanhoe! an Ivanhoe!" he still shouted, and down went a man as sure as he said "hoe!"

Nevertheless he is again killed by multitudes, or very nearly,—and has again to be cured by the tender nursing of Wamba. But Athelstane is really dead, and Rowena and the boy have to be found. He does his duty and finds them,—just in time to be present at Rowena's death. She has been put in prison by king John, and is in extremis when her first husband gets to her. "Wilfrid, my early loved,"[1] slowly gasped she removing her gray

[1] There is something almost illnatured in his treatment of Rowena, who is very false in her declarations of love;—and it is to be feared that by Rowena, the autho intends the normal married lady of English society.

hair from her furrowed temples, and gazing on her boy fondly as he nestled on Ivanhoe's knee,—"promise me by St. Waltheof of Templestowe,—promise me one boon!"

"I do," said Ivanhoe, clasping the boy, and thinking that it was to that little innocent that the promise was intended to apply.

"By St. Waltheof!"

"By St. Waltheof!"

"Promise me then," gasped Rowena, staring wildly at him, "that you will never marry a Jewess!"

"By St. Waltheof!" cried Ivanhoe, "but this is too much," and he did not make the promise.

"Having placed young Cedric at school at the Hall of Dotheboys, in Yorkshire, and arranged his family affairs, Sir Wilfrid of Ivanhoe quitted a country which had no longer any charm for him, as there was no fighting to be done, and in which his stay was rendered less agreeable by the notion that king John would hang him." So he goes forth and fights again, in league with the Knights of St. John,—the Templars naturally having a dislike to him because of Brian de Bois Guilbert. "The only fault that the great and gallant, though severe and ascetic Folko of Heydenbraten, the chief of the Order of St. John, found with the melancholy warrior whose lance did such service to the cause, was that he did not persecute the Jews as so religious a knight should. So the Jews, in cursing the Christians, always excepted the name of the Desdichado,—or the double disinherited, as he now was,—the Desdichado Doblado." Then came the battle of Alarcos, and the Moors were all but in possession of the whole of Spain. Sir Wilfrid, like other good Christians, cannot endure this, so he takes ship in Bohemia, where he happens to be quartered, and has himself carried to Barcelona, and

proceeds "to slaughter the Moors forthwith." Then there is a scene in which Isaac of York comes on as a messenger, to ransom from a Spanish knight, Don Beltram de Cuchilla y Trabuco, y Espada, y Espelon, a little Moorish girl. The Spanish knight of course murders the little girl instead of taking the ransom. Two hundred thousand dirhems are offered, however much that may be; but the knight, who happens to be in funds at the time, prefers to kill the little girl. All this is only necessary to the story as introducing Isaac of York. Sir Wilfrid is of course intent upon finding Rebecca. Through all his troubles and triumphs, from his gaining and his losing of Rowena, from the day on which he had been "*locked up with the Jewess in the tower*," he had always been true to her. "Away from me!" said the old Jew, tottering. "Away, Rebecca is,—dead!" Then Ivanhoe goes out and kills fifty thousand Moors, and there is the picture of him,—killing them.

But Rebecca is not dead at all. Her father had said so because Rebecca had behaved very badly to him. She had refused to marry the Moorish prince, or any of her own people, the Jews, and had gone as far as to declare her passion for Ivanhoe and her resolution to be a Christian. All the Jews and Jewesses in Valencia turned against her,—so that she was locked up in the back-kitchen and almost starved to death. But Ivanhoe found her of course, and makes her Mrs. Ivanhoe, or Lady Wilfrid the second. Then Thackeray tells us how for many years he, Thackeray, had not ceased to feel that it ought to be so. "Indeed I have thought of it any time these five-and-twenty years,—ever since, as a boy at school, I commenced the noble study of novels,—ever since the day when, lying on sunny slopes, of half-holidays, the fair

chivalrous figures and beautiful shapes of knights and ladies were visible to me, ever since I grew to love Rebecca, that sweetest creature of the poet's fancy, and longed to see her righted."

And so, no doubt, it had been. The very burlesque had grown from the way in which his young imagination had been moved by Scott's romance. He had felt from the time of those happy half-holidays in which he had been lucky enough to get hold of the novel, that according to all laws of poetic justice, Rebecca, as being the more beautiful and the more interesting of the heroines, was entitled to the possession of the hero. We have all of us felt the same. But to him had been present at the same time all that is ludicrous in our ideas of middle-age chivalry; the absurdity of its recorded deeds, the blood-thirstiness of its recreations, the selfishness of its men, the falseness of its honour, the cringing of its loyalty, the tyranny of its princes. And so there came forth Rebecca and Rowena, all broad fun from beginning to end, but never without a purpose,—the best burlesque, as I think, in our language.

CHAPTER VII.

THACKERAY'S LECTURES.

In speaking of Thackeray's life I have said why and how it was that he took upon himself to lecture, and have also told the reader that he was altogether successful in carrying out the views proposed to himself. Of his peculiar manner of lecturing I have said but little, never having heard him. "He pounded along,—very clearly," I have been told; from which I surmise that there was no special grace of eloquence, but that he was always audible. I cannot imagine that he should have been ever eloquent. He could not have taken the trouble necessary with his voice, with his cadences, or with his outward appearance. I imagine that they who seem so naturally to fall into the proprieties of elocution have generally taken a great deal of trouble beyond that which the mere finding of their words has cost them. It is clearly to the matter of what he then gave the world, and not to the manner, that we must look for what interest is to be found in the lectures.

Those on *The English Humorists* were given first. The second set was on *The Four Georges*. In the volume now before us *The Georges* are printed first, and the whole is produced simply as a part of Thackeray's literary work. Looked at, however, in that light the merit of the

two sets of biographical essays is very different. In the one we have all the anecdotes which could be brought together respecting four of our kings,—who as men were not peculiar, though their reigns were, and will always be, famous, because the country during the period was increasing greatly in prosperity and was ever strengthening the hold it had upon its liberties. In the other set the lecturer was a man of letters dealing with men of letters, and himself a prince among humorists is dealing with the humorists of his own country and language. One could not imagine a better subject for such discourses from Thackeray's mouth than the latter. The former was not, I think, so good.

In discussing the lives of kings the biographer may trust to personal details or to historical facts. He may take the man, and say what good or evil may be said of him as a man;—or he may take the period, and tell his readers what happened to the country while this or the other king was on the throne. In the case with which we are dealing, the lecturer had not time enough or room enough for real history. His object was to let his audience know of what nature were the men; and we are bound to say that the pictures have not on the whole been flattering. It was almost necessary that with such a subject such should be the result. A story of family virtues, with princes and princesses well brought up, with happy family relations, all couleur de rose,—as it would of course become us to write if we were dealing with the life of a living sovereign,—would not be interesting. No one on going to hear Thackeray lecture on the Georges expected that. There must be some piquancy given, or the lecture would be dull;—and the eulogy of personal virtues can seldom be piquant. It is difficult to

speak fittingly of a sovereign, either living or not long since gone. You can hardly praise such a one without flattery. You can hardly censure him without injustice. We are either ignorant of his personal doings or we know them as secrets, which have been divulged for the most part either falsely or treacherously,—often both falsely and treacherously. It is better, perhaps, that we should not deal with the personalities of princes.

I believe that Thackeray fancied that he had spoken well of George III., and am sure that it was his intention to do so. But the impression he leaves is poor. "He is said not to have cared for Shakespeare or tragedy much; farces and pantomimes were his joy;—and especially when clown swallowed a carrot or a string of sausages, he would laugh so outrageously that the lovely princess by his side would have to say, 'My gracious monarch, do compose yourself.' 'George, be a king!' were the words which she,"—his mother,—"was ever croaking in the ears of her son; and a king the simple, stubborn, affectionate, bigoted man tried to be." "He did his best; he worked according to his lights; what virtues he knew he tried to practise; what knowledge he could master he strove to acquire." If the lectures were to be popular, it was absolutely necessary that they should be written in this strain. A lecture simply laudatory on the life of St. Paul would not draw even the bench of bishops to listen to it; but were a flaw found in the apostle's life, the whole Church of England would be bound to know all about it. I am quite sure that Thackeray believed every word that he said in the lectures, and that he intended to put in the good and the bad, honestly, as they might come to his hand. We may be quite sure that he did not intend to flatter the royal family;—equally sure that he would not

calumniate. There were, however, so many difficulties to be encountered that I cannot but think that the subject was ill-chosen. In making them so amusing as he did and so little offensive great ingenuity was shown.

I will now go back to the first series, in which the lecturer treated of Swift, Congreve, Addison, Steele, Prior, Gay, Pope, Hogarth, Smollett, Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith. All these Thackeray has put in their proper order, placing the men from the date of their birth, except Prior, who was in truth the eldest of the lot, but whom it was necessary to depose, in order that the great Swift might stand first on the list, and Smollett, who was not born till fourteen years after Fielding, eight years after Sterne, and who has been moved up, I presume, simply from caprice. From the birth of the first to the death of the last, was a period of nearly a hundred years. They were never absolutely all alive together; but it was nearly so, Addison and Prior having died before Smollett was born. Whether we should accept as humorists the full catalogue, may be a question; though we shall hardly wish to eliminate any one from such a dozen of names. Pope we should hardly define as a humorist, were we to be seeking for a definition specially fit for him, though we shall certainly not deny the gift of humour to the author of *The Rape of the Lock*, or to the translator of any portion of *The Odyssey*. Nor should we have included Fielding or Smollett, in spite of Parson Adams and Tabitha Bramble, unless anxious to fill a good company. That Hogarth was specially a humorist no one will deny; but in speaking of humorists we should have presumed, unless otherwise notified, that humorists in letters only had been intended. As Thackeray explains clearly what he means by a humorist, I may as well here repeat the passage,

"If humour only meant laughter, you would scarcely feel more interest about humorous writers than about the private life of poor Harlequin just mentioned, who possesses in common with these the power of making you laugh. But the men regarding whose lives and stories your kind presence here shows that you have curiosity and sympathy, appeal to a great number of our other faculties, besides our mere sense of ridicule. The humorous writer professes to awaken and direct your love, your pity, your kindness,—your scorn for untruth, pretension, imposture, —your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the unhappy. To the best of his means and ability he comments on all the ordinary actions and passions of life almost. He takes upon himself to be the week-day preacher, so to speak. Accordingly, as he finds, and speaks, and feels the truth best, we regard him, esteem him,—sometimes love him. And as his business is to mark other people's lives and peculiarities, we moralise upon *his* life when he is gone,—and yesterday's preacher becomes the text for to-day's sermon."

Having thus explained his purpose, Thackeray begins his task, and puts Swift in his front rank as a humorist. The picture given of this great man has very manifestly the look of truth, and if true, is terrible indeed. We do, in fact, know it to be true,—even though it be admitted that there is still room left for a book to be written on the life of the fearful dean. Here was a man endued with an intellect pellucid as well as brilliant; who could not only conceive but see also,—with some fine instincts too; whom fortune did not flout; whom circumstances fairly served; but who, from first to last, was miserable himself, who made others miserable, and who deserved misery. Our business, during the page or two which we can give to the

subject, is not with Swift but with Thackeray's picture of Swift. It is painted with colours terribly strong and with shadows fearfully deep. "Would you like to have lived with him?" Thackeray asks. Then he says how pleasant it would have been to have passed some time with Fielding, Johnson, or Goldsmith. "I should like to have been Shakespeare's shoeblack," he says. "But Swift! If you had been his inferior in parts,—and that, with a great respect for all persons present, I fear is only very likely,—his equal in mere social station, he would have bullied, scorned, and insulted you. If, undeterred by his great reputation, you had met him like a man, he would have quailed before you and not had the pluck to reply,—and gone home, and years after written a foul epigram upon you." There is a picture! "If you had been a lord with a blue riband, who flattered his vanity, or could help his ambition, he would have been the most delightful company in the world. . . . . How he would have torn your enemies to pieces for you, and made fun of the Opposition! His servility was so boisterous that it looked like independence." He was a man whose mind was never fixed on high things, but was striving always after something which, little as it might be, and successful as he was, should always be out of his reach. It had been his misfortune to become a clergyman, because the way to church preferment seemed to be the readiest. He became, as we all know, a dean,—but never a bishop, and was therefore wretched. Thackeray describes him as a clerical highwayman, seizing on all he could get. But "the great prize has not yet come. The coach with the mitre and crozier in it, which he intends to have for *his* share, has been delayed on the way from St. James's; and he waits and waits till nightfall, when his runners come and tell him that the

coach has taken a different way and escaped him. So he fires his pistol into the air with a curse, and rides away into his own country;"—or, in other words, takes a poor deanery in Ireland.

Thackeray explains very correctly, as I think, the nature of the weapons which the man used,—namely, the words and style with which he wrote. "That Swift was born at No. 7, Hoey's Court, Dublin, on November 30, 1667, is a certain fact, of which nobody will deny the sister-island the honour and glory; but it seems to me he was no more an Irishman than a man born of English parents at Calcutta is a Hindoo. Goldsmith was an Irishman and always an Irishman; Steele was an Irishman and always an Irishman; Swift's heart was English and in England, his habits English, his logic eminently English; his statement is elaborately simple; he shuns tropes and metaphors, and uses his ideas and words with a wise thrift and economy, as he used his money;—with which he could be generous and splendid upon great occasions, but which he husbanded when there was no need to spend it. He never indulges in needless extravagance of rhetoric, lavish epithets, profuse imagery. He lays his opinions before you with a grave simplicity and a perfect neatness." This is quite true of him, and the result is that though you may deny him sincerity, simplicity, humanity, or good taste, you can hardly find fault with his language.

Swift was a clergyman, and this is what Thackeray says of him in regard to his sacred profession. "I know of few things more conclusive as to the sincerity of Swift's religion, than his advice to poor John Gay to turn clergyman, and look out for a seat on the Bench! Gay, the author of *The Beggar's Opera*; Gay, the

wildest of the wits about town! It was this man that Jonathan Swift advised to take orders, to mount in a cassock and bands,—just as he advised him to husband his shillings, and put his thousand pounds out to interest."

It was not that he was without religion,—or without, rather, his religious beliefs and doubts, "for Swift," says Thackeray, "was a reverent, was a pious spirit. For Swift could love and could pray." Left to himself and to the natural thoughts of his mind, without those "orders" to which he had bound himself as a necessary part of his trade, he could have turned to his God with questionings which need not then have been heartbreaking. "It is my belief," says Thackeray, "that he suffered frightfully from the consciousness of his own scepticism, and that he had bent his pride so far down as to put his apostasy out to hire." I doubt whether any of Swift's works are very much read now, but perhaps Gulliver's travels are oftener in the hands of modern readers than any other. Of all the satires in our language it is probably the most cynical, the most absolutely illnatured, and therefore the falsest. Let those who care to form an opinion of Swift's mind from the best known of his works, turn to Thackeray's account of Gulliver. I can imagine no greater proof of misery than to have been able to write such a book as that.

It is thus that the lecturer concludes his lecture about Swift. "He shrank away from all affections sooner or later. Stella and Vanessa both died near him, and away from him. He had not heart enough to see them die. He broke from his fastest friend, Sheridan. He slunk away from his fondest admirer, Pope. His laugh jars on one's ear after seven-score years. He was always alone,—

alone and gnashing in the darkness, except when Stella's sweet smile came and shone on him. When that went, silence and utter night closed over him. An immense genius, an awful downfall and ruin! So great a man he seems to me, that thinking of him is like thinking of an empire falling. We have other great names to mention,—none I think, however, so great or so gloomy." And so we pass on from Swift, feeling that though the man was certainly a humorist, we have had as yet but little to do with humour.

Congreve is the next who, however truly he may have been a humorist, is described here rather as a man of fashion. A man of fashion he certainly was, but is best known in our literature as a comedian,—worshipping that comic Muse to whom Thackeray hesitates to introduce his audience, because she is not only merry but shameless also. Congreve's muse was about as bad as any muse that ever misbehaved herself,—and I think, as little amusing. "Reading in these plays now," says Thackeray, "is like shutting your ears and looking at people dancing. What does it mean?—the measures, the grimaces, the bowing, shuffling, and retreating, the cavaliers seuls advancing upon their ladies, then ladies and men twirling round at the end in a mad galop, after which everybody bows and the quaint rite is celebrated?" It is always so with Congreve's plays, and Etherege's and Wycherley's. The world we meet there is not our world, and as we read the plays we have no sympathy with these unknown people. It was not that they lived so long ago. They are much nearer to us in time than the men and women who figured on the stage in the reign of James I. But their nature is farther from our nature. They sparkle but never warm. They are witty but leave no impres-

sion. I might almost go further, and say that they are wicked but never allure. "When Voltaire came to visit the Great Congreve," says Thackeray, "the latter rather affected to despise his literary reputation; and in this, perhaps, the great Congreve was not far wrong. A touch of Steele's tenderness is worth all his finery; a flash of Swift's lightning, a beam of Addison's pure sunshine, and his tawdry playhouse taper is invisible. But the ladies loved him, and he was undoubtedly a pretty fellow."

There is no doubt as to the true humour of Addison, who next comes up before us, but I think that he makes hardly so good a subject for a lecturer as the great gloomy man of intellect, or the frivolous man of pleasure. Thackeray tells us all that is to be said about him as a humorist in so few lines that I may almost insert them on this page: "But it is not for his reputation as the great author of *Cato* and *The Campaign*, or for his merits as Secretary of State, or for his rank and high distinction as Lady Warwick's husband, or for his eminence as an examiner of political questions on the Whig side, or a guardian of British liberties, that we admire Joseph Addison. It is as a Tattler of small talk and a Spectator of mankind that we cherish and love him, and owe as much pleasure to him as to any human being that ever wrote. He came in that artificial age, and began to speak with his noble natural voice. He came the gentle satirist, who hit no unfair blow; the kind judge, who castigated only in smiling. While Swift went about hanging and ruthless, a literary Jeffreys, in Addison's kind court only minor cases were tried;—only peccadilloes and small sins against society, only a dangerous libertinism in tuckers and hoops, or a nuisance in the abuse of beaux canes and

snuffboxes." Steele set *The Tatler* a going. "But with his friend's discovery of *The Tatler*, Addison's calling was found, and the most delightful Tattler in the world began to speak. He does not go very deep. Let gentlemen of a profound genius, critics accustomed to the plunge of the bathos, console themselves by thinking that he couldn't go very deep. There is no trace of suffering in his writing. He was so good, so honest, so healthy, so cheerfully selfish,—if I must use the word!"

Such was Addison as a humorist; and when the hearer shall have heard also,—or the reader read,—that this most charming Tattler also wrote *Cato*, became a Secretary of State, and married a countess, he will have learned all that Thackeray had to tell of him.

Steele was one who stood much less high in the world's esteem, and who left behind him a much smaller name,—but was quite Addison's equal as a humorist and a wit. Addison, though he had the reputation of a toper, was respectability itself. Steele was almost always disreputable. He was brought from Ireland, placed at the Charter House, and then transferred to Oxford, where he became acquainted with Addison. Thackeray says that "Steele found Addison a stately college don at Oxford." The stateliness and the don's rank were attributable no doubt to the more sober character of the English lad, for, in fact, the two men were born in the same year, 1672. Steele, who during his life was affected by various different tastes, first turned himself to literature, but early in life was bitten by the hue of a red coat and became a trooper in the Horse Guards. To the end he vacillated in the same way. "In that charming paper in *The Tatler*, in which he records his father's death, his mother's griefs, his own most solemn

and tender emotions, he says he is interrupted by the arrival of a hamper of wine, 'the same as is to be sold at Garraway's next week;' upon the receipt of which he sends for three friends, and they fall to instantly, drinking two bottles apiece, with great benefit to themselves, and not separating till two o'clock in the morning."

He had two wives, whom he loved dearly and treated badly. He hired grand houses, and bought fine horses for which he could never pay. He was often religious, but more often drunk. As a man of letters, other men of letters who followed him, such as Thackeray, could not be very proud of him. But everybody loved him; and he seems to have been the inventor of that flying literature which, with many changes in form and manner, has done so much for the amusement and edification of readers ever since his time. He was always commencing, or carrying on,—often editing,—some one of the numerous periodicals which appeared during his time. Thackeray mentions seven: *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, *The Guardian*, *The Englishman*, *The Lover*, *The Reader*, and *The Theatre*; that three of them are well known to this day,—the three first named,—and are to be found in all libraries, is proof that his life was not thrown away.

I almost question Prior's right to be in the list, unless indeed the mastery over well-turned conceits is to be included within the border of humour. But Thackeray had a strong liking for Prior, and in his own humorous way rebukes his audience for not being familiar with *The Town and Country Mouse*. He says that Prior's epigrams have the genuine sparkle, and compares Prior to Horace. "His song, his philosophy, his good sense, his happy easy

turns and melody, his loves and his epicureanism bear a great resemblance to that most delightful and accomplished master." I cannot say that I agree with this. Prior is generally neat in his expression. Horace is happy,—which is surely a great deal more.

All that is said of Gay, Pope, Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding is worth reading, and may be of great value both to those who have not time to study the authors, and to those who desire to have their own judgments somewhat guided, somewhat assisted. That they were all men of humour there can be no doubt. Whether either of them, except perhaps Gay, would have been specially ranked as a humorist among men of letters, may be a question.

Sterne was a humorist, and employed his pen in that line, if ever a writer did so, and so was Goldsmith. Of the excellence and largeness of the disposition of the one, and the meanness and littleness of the other, it is not necessary that I should here say much. But I will give a short passage from our author as to each. He has been quoting somewhat at length from Sterne, and thus he ends; "And with this pretty dance and chorus the volume artfully concludes. Even here one can't give the whole description. There is not a page in Sterne's writing but has something that were better away, a latent corruption,—a hint as of an impure presence. Some of that dreary double entendre may be attributed to freer times and manners than ours,—but not all. The foul satyr's eyes leer out of the leaves constantly. The last words the famous author wrote were bad and wicked. The last lines the poor stricken wretch penned were for pity and pardon." Now a line or two about Goldsmith, and I will then let my reader go to the volume and study the lectures for himself. "The poor fellow was never so friendless

but that he could befriend some one; never so pinched and wretched but he could give of his crust, and speak his word of compassion. If he had but his flute left, he would give that, and make the children happy in the dreary London courts."

Of this too I will remind my readers,—those who have bookshelves well-filled to adorn their houses,—that Goldsmith stands in the front where all the young people see the volumes. There are few among the young people who do not refresh their sense of humour occasionally from that shelf, Sterne is relegated to some distant and high corner. The less often that he is taken down the better. Thackeray makes some half excuse for him because of the greater freedom of the times. But "the times" were the same for the two. Both Sterne and Goldsmith wrote in the reign of George II.; both died in the reign of George III.

CHAPTER VIII.

THACKERAY'S BALLADS.

We have a volume of Thackeray's poems, republished under the name of *Ballads*, which is, I think, to a great extent a misnomer. They are all readable, almost all good, full of humour, and with some fine touches of pathos, most happy in their versification, and, with a few exceptions, hitting well on the head the nail which he intended to hit. But they are not on that account ballads. Literally, a ballad is a song, but it has come to signify a short chronicle in verse, which may be political, or pathetic, or grotesque,—or it may have all three characteristics or any two of them; but not on that account is any grotesque poem a ballad,—nor, of course, any pathetic or any political poem. *Jacob Omnium's Hoss* may fairly be called a ballad, containing as it does a chronicle of a certain well-defined transaction; and the story of *King Canute* is a ballad,—one of the best that has been produced in our language in modern years. But such pieces as those called *The End of the Play* and *Vanitas Vanitatum*, which are didactic as well as pathetic, are not ballads in the common sense; nor are such songs as *The Mahogany Tree*, or the little collection called *Love Songs made Easy*. The majority of the pieces are not

ballads, but if they be good of the kind we should be ungrateful to quarrel much with the name.

How very good most of them are, I did not know till I re-read them for the purpose of writing this chapter. There is a manifest falling off in some few,—which has come from that source of literary failure which is now so common. If a man write a book or a poem because it is in him to write it,—the motive power being altogether in himself and coming from his desire to express himself,—he will write it well, presuming him to be capable of the effort. But if he write his book or poem simply because a book or poem is required from him, let his capability be what it may, it is not unlikely that he will do it badly. Thackeray occasionally suffered from the weakness thus produced. A ballad from *Policeman X*,—*Bow Street Ballads* they were first called,—was required by *Punch*, and had to be forthcoming, whatever might be the poet's humour, by a certain time. *Jacob Omnium's Hoss* is excellent. His heart and feeling were all there, on behalf of his friend, and against that obsolete old court of justice. But we can tell well when he was looking through the police reports for a subject, and taking what chance might send him, without any special interest in the matter. *The Knight and the Lady of Bath*, and the *Damages Two Hundred Pounds*, as they were demanded at Guildford, taste as though they were written to order.

Here, in his verses as in his prose, the charm of Thackeray's work lies in the mingling of humour with pathos and indignation. There is hardly a piece that is not more or less funny, hardly a piece that is not satirical; —and in most of them, for those who will look a little below the surface, there is something that will touch them. Thackeray, though he rarely uttered a word, either

with his pen or his mouth, in which there was not an intention to reach our sense of humour, never was only funny. When he was most determined to make us laugh, he had always a further purpose;—some pity was to be extracted from us on behalf of the sorrows of men, or some indignation at the evil done by them.

This is the beginning of that story as to the *Two Hundred Pounds*, for which as a ballad I do not care very much:

> Special jurymen of England who admire your country's laws,
> And proclaim a British jury worthy of the nation's applause,
> Gaily compliment each other at the issue of a cause,
> Which was tried at Guildford 'sizes, this day week as ever was.

Here he is indignant, not only in regard to some miscarriage of justice on that special occasion, but at the general unfitness of jurymen for the work confided to them. "Gaily compliment yourselves," he says, "on your beautiful constitution, from which come such beautiful results as those I am going to tell you!" When he reminded us that Ivanhoe had produced Magna Charta, there was a purpose of irony even there in regard to our vaunted freedom. With all your Magna Charta and your juries, what are you but snobs! There is nothing so often misguided as general indignation, and I think that in his judgment of outside things, in the measure which he usually took of them, Thackeray was very frequently misguided. A satirist by trade will learn to satirise everything, till the light of the sun and the moon's loveliness will become evil and mean to him. I think that he was mistaken in his views of things. But we have to do with him as a writer, not as a political economist or a politician. His indignation was all true, and the expression of it was often perfect. The lines in which he

addresses that Pallis Court, at the end of *Jacob Omnium's Hoss*, are almost sublime.

O Pallis Court, you move
My pity most profound.
A most amusing sport
You thought it, I'll be bound,
To saddle hup a three-pound debt,
With two-and-twenty pound.

Come down from that tribewn,
Thou shameless and unjust;
Thou swindle, picking pockets in
The name of Truth august;
Come down, thou hoary Blasphemy,
For die thou shalt and must.

Good sport it is to you
To grind the honest poor,
To pay their just or unjust debts
With eight hundred per cent, for Lor;
Make haste and get your costes in,
They will not last much mor!

And go it, Jacob Homnium,
And ply your iron pen,
And rise up, Sir John Jervis,
And shut me up that den;
That sty for fattening lawyers in,
On the bones of honest men.

"Come down from that tribewn, thou shameless and unjust!" It is impossible not to feel that he felt this as he wrote it.

There is a branch of his poetry which he calls,—or which at any rate is now called, *Lyra Hybernica*, for which no doubt *The Groves of Blarney* was his model. There have been many imitations since, of which perhaps Barham's ballad on the coronation was the best, "When to Westminster the Royal Spinster and the Duke of Leinster all in order did repair!" Thackeray in some of his attempts has been equally droll and equally graphic. That on *The Cristal Palace*,—not that at Sydenham, but its forerunner, the palace of the Great Exhibition,—is very good, as the following catalogue of its contents will show;

There's holy saints
And window paints,
By Maydiayval Pugin;

Alhamborough Jones
Did paint the tones
Of yellow and gambouge in.

There's fountains there
And crosses fair;
  There's water-gods with urns;
There's organs three,
To play, d'ye see?
  "God save the Queen," by turns.

There's statues bright
Of marble white,
  Of silver, and of copper;
And some in zinc,
And some, I think
  That isn't over proper.

There's staym ingynes,
That stands in lines,
  Enormous and amazing,
That squeal and snort
Like whales in sport,
  Or elephants a grazing.

There's carts and gigs,
And pins for pigs,
  There's dibblers and there's harrows,
And ploughs like toys
For little boys,
  And ilegant wheel-barrows.

For thim gentéels
Who ride on wheels,
  There's plenty to indulge 'em
There's droskys snug
From Paytersbug,
  And vayhycles from Bulgium.

There's cabs on stands
And shandthry danns;
  There's waggons from New York here;
There's Lapland sleighs
Have cross'd the seas,
  And jaunting cyars from Cork here.

In writing this Thackeray was a little late with his copy for *Punch*; not, we should say, altogether an uncommon accident to him. It should have been with the editor early on Saturday, if not before, but did not come till late on Saturday evening. The editor, who was among men the most good-natured and I should think the most forbearing, either could not, or in this case would not, insert it in the next week's issue, and Thackeray, angry and disgusted, sent it to *The Times*. In *The Times* of next Monday it appeared,—very much I should think to the delight of the readers of that august newspaper.

Mr. Molony's account of the ball given to the Nepaulese ambassadors by the Peninsular and Oriental Company, is so like Barham's coronation in the account

it gives of the guests, that one would fancy it must be by the same hand.

The noble Chair[1] stud at the stair
And bade the dhrums to thump; and he
Did thus evince to that Black Prince
The welcome of his Company.[2]

O fair the girls and rich the curls,
And bright the oys you saw there was
And fixed each oye you then could spoi
On General Jung Bahawther was!

This gineral great then tuck his sate,
With all the other ginerals,
Bedad his troat, his belt, his coat,
All bleezed with precious minerals;
And as he there, with princely air,
Recloinin on his cushion was,
All round about his royal chair
The squeezin and the pushin was.

O Pat, such girls, such jukes and earls,
Such fashion and nobilitee!
Just think of Tim, and fancy him
Amidst the high gentilitee!
There was the Lord de L'Huys, and the Portygeese
Ministher and his lady there,
And I recognised, with much surprise,
Our messmate, Bob O'Grady, there.

All these are very good fun,—so good in humour and so good in expression, that it would be needless to criticise their peculiar dialect, were it not that Thackeray has made for himself a reputation by his writing of Irish. In this he has been so entirely successful that for many English

[1] Chair—*i.e.* Chairman. [2] *I.e.* The P. and O. Company.

readers he has established a new language which may not improperly be called Hybernico-Thackerayan. If comedy is to be got from peculiarities of dialect, as no doubt it is, one form will do as well as another, so long as those who read it know no better. So it has been with Thackeray's Irish, for in truth he was not familiar with the modes of pronunciation which make up Irish brogue. Therefore, though he is always droll, he is not true to nature. Many an Irishman coming to London, not unnaturally tries to imitate the talk of Londoners. You or I, reader, were we from the West, and were the dear County Galway to send either of us to Parliament, would probably endeavour to drop the dear brogue of our country, and in doing so we should make some mistakes. It was these mistakes which Thackeray took for the natural Irish tone. He was amused to hear a major called "Meejor," but was unaware that the sound arose from Pat's affection of English softness of speech. The expression natural to the unadulterated Irishman would rather be "Ma-ajor." He discovers his own provincialism, and trying to be polite and urbane, he says "Meejor." In one of the lines I have quoted there occurs the word "troat." Such a sound never came naturally from the mouth of an Irishman. He puts in an h instead of omitting it, and says "dhrink." He comes to London, and finding out that he is wrong with his "dhrink," he leaves out all the h's he can, and thus comes to "troat." It is this which Thackeray has heard. There is a little piece called the *Last Irish Grievance*, to which Thackeray adds a still later grievance, by the false sounds which he elicits from the calumniated mouth of the pretended Irish poet. Slaves are "sleeves," places are "pleeces," Lord John is "Lard Jahn," fatal is "fetal," danger is "deenger," and native is "neetive."

All these are unintended slanders. Tea, Hibernicé, is "tay," please is "plaise," sea is "say," and ease is "aise." The softer sound of e is broadened out by the natural Irishman,—not, to my ear, without a certain euphony;—but no one in Ireland says or hears the reverse. The Irishman who in London might talk of his "neetive" race, would be mincing his words to please the ear of the cockney.

The Chronicle of the Drum would be a true ballad all through, were it not that there is tacked on to it a long moral in an altered metre. I do not much value the moral, but the ballad is excellent, not only in much of its versification and in the turns of its language, but in the quaint and true picture it gives of the French nation. The drummer, either by himself or by some of his family, has drummed through a century of French battling, caring much for his country and its glory, but understanding nothing of the causes for which he is enthusiastic. Whether for King, Republic, or Emperor, whether fighting and conquering or fighting and conquered, he is happy as long as he can beat his drum on a field of glory. But throughout his adventures there is a touch of chivalry about our drummer. In all the episodes of his country's career he feels much of patriotism and something of tenderness. It is thus he sings during the days of the Revolution:

> We had taken the head of King Capet,
> We called for the blood of his wife;
> Undaunted she came to the scaffold,
> And bared her fair neck to the knife.
> As she felt the foul fingers that touched her,
> She shrank, but she deigned not to speak;
> She looked with a royal disdain,
> And died with a blush on her cheek!

'Twas thus that our country was saved!
So told us the Safety Committee!
But, psha, I've the heart of a soldier,—
All gentleness, mercy, and pity.
I loathed to assist at such deeds,
And my drum beat its loudest of tunes,
As we offered to justice offended,
The blood of the bloody tribunes.

Away with such foul recollections!
No more of the axe and the block.
I saw the last fight of the sections,
As they fell 'neath our guns at St. Rock.
Young Bonaparte led us that day.

And so it goes on. I will not continue the stanza, because it contains the worst rhyme that Thackeray ever permitted himself to use. *The Chronicle of the Drum* has not the finish which he achieved afterwards, but it is full of national feeling, and carries on its purpose to the end with an admirable persistency;

A curse on those British assassins
Who ordered the slaughter of Ney;
A curse on Sir Hudson who tortured
The life of our hero away.
A curse on all Russians,—I hate them;
On all Prussian and Austrian fry;
And, oh, but I pray we may meet them
And fight them again ere I die.

The White Squall,—which I can hardly call a ballad, unless any description of a scene in verse may be included in the name,—is surely one of the most graphic descriptions ever put into verse. Nothing written by Thackeray shows more plainly his power over words and rhymes. He draws his picture without a line omitted or a line too much, saying with apparent facility all that he has to say,

l so saying it that every word conveys its natural aning.

When a squall, upon a sudden,
Came o'er the waters scudding;
And the clouds began to gather,
And the sea was lashed to lather,
And the lowering thunder grumbled,
And the lightning jumped and tumbled,
And the ship and all the ocean
Woke up in wild commotion.
Then the wind set up a howling,
And the poodle dog a yowling,
And the cocks began a crowing,
And the old cow raised a lowing,
As she heard the tempest blowing;
And fowls and geese did cackle,
And the cordage and the tackle
Began to shriek and crackle;
And the spray dashed o'er the funnels,
And down the deck in runnels;
And the rushing water soaks all,
From the seamen in the fo'ksal
To the stokers whose black faces
Peer out of their bed-places;
And the captain, he was bawling,
And the sailors pulling, hauling,
And the quarter-deck tarpauling
Was shivered in the squalling;
And the passengers awaken,
Most pitifully shaken;
And the steward jumps up and hastens
For the necessary basins.

Then the Greeks they groaned and quivered.
And they knelt, and moaned, and shivered,
As the plunging waters met them,
And splashed and overset them;
And they call in their emergence
Upon countless saints and virgins;
And their marrowbones are bended,
And they think the world is ended.

And the Turkish women for'ard
Were frightened and behorror'd;
And shrieking and bewildering,
The mothers clutched their children;
The men sang "Allah! Illah!
Mashallah Bis-millah!"
As the warning waters doused them,
And splashed them and soused them
And they called upon the Prophet,
And thought but little of it.

*

Then all the fleas in Jewry
Jumped up and bit like fury;
And the progeny of Jacob
Did on the main-deck wake up.
(I wot these greasy Rabbins
Would never pay for cabins);
And each man moaned and jabbered in
His filthy Jewish gaberdine,
In woe and lamentation,
And howling consternation.
And the splashing water drenches
Their dirty brats and wenches;
And they crawl from bales and benches,
In a hundred thousand stenches.
This was the White Squall famous,
Which latterly o'ercame us.

Peg of Limavaddy has always been very popular, and the public have not, I think, been generally aware that the young lady in question lived in truth at Newton Limavady (with one d). But with the correct name Thackeray would hardly have been so successful with his rhymes.

Citizen or Squire
  Tory, Whig, or Radi-
Cal would all desire
  Peg of Limavaddy.

Had I Homer's fire
  Or that of Sergeant Taddy
Meetly I'd admire
  Peg of Limavaddy.
And till I expire
  Or till I go mad I
Will sing unto my lyre
  Peg of Limavaddy.

The Cane-bottomed Chair is another, better, I think, than *Peg of Limavaddy*, as containing that mixture of burlesque with the pathetic which belonged so peculiarly to Thackeray, and which was indeed the very essence of his genius.

But of all the cheap treasures that garnish my nest,
  There's one that I love and I cherish the best.
For the finest of couches that's padded with hair
  I never would change thee, my cane-bottomed chair.

'Tis a bandy-legged, high-bottomed, worm-eaten seat,
  With a creaking old back and twisted old feet;
But since the fair morning when Fanny sat there,
  I bless thee and love thee, old cane-bottomed chair.

* * * *

She comes from the past and revisits my room,
  She looks as she then did all beauty and bloom;
So smiling and tender, so fresh and so fair,
  And yonder she sits in my cane-bottomed chair.

This, in the volume which I have now before me, is followed by a picture of Fanny in the chair, to which I cannot but take exception. I am quite sure that when Fanny graced the room and seated herself in the chair of her old bachelor friend, she had not on a low dress and loosely-flowing drawing-room shawl, nor was there a foot-stool ready for her feet. I doubt also the headgear. Fanny on that occasion was dressed in her morning apparel, and

had walked through the streets, carried no fan, and wore no brooch but one that might be necessary for pinning her shawl.

The Great Cossack Epic is the longest of the ballads. It is a legend of St. Sophia of Kioff, telling how Father Hyacinth, by the aid of St. Sophia, whose wooden statue he carried with him, escaped across the Borysthenes with all the Cossacks at his tail. It is very good fun; but not equal to many of the others. Nor is the *Carmen Lilliense* quite to my taste. I should not have declared at once that it had come from Thackeray's hand, had I not known it.

But who could doubt the *Bouillabaisse?* Who else could have written that? Who at the same moment could have been so merry and so melancholy,—could have gone so deep into the regrets of life, with words so appropriate to its jollities? I do not know how far my readers will agree with me that to read it always must be a fresh pleasure; but in order that they may agree with me, if they can, I will give it to them entire. If there be one whom it does not please, he will like nothing that Thackeray ever wrote in verse.

THE BALLAD OF BOUILLABAISSE.

A street there is in Paris famous,
For which no rhyme our language yields,
Rue Neuve des Petits Champs its name is—
The New Street of the Little Fields;
And here's an inn, not rich and splendid,
But still in comfortable case;
The which in youth I oft attended,
To eat a bowl of Bouillabaisse.

This Bouillabaisse a noble dish is,—
A sort of soup, or broth, or brew

Or hotch-potch of all sorts of fishes,
That Greenwich never could outdo;
Green herbs, red peppers, mussels, saffron,
Soles, onions, garlic, roach, and dace:
All these you eat at Terré's tavern,
In that one dish of Bouillabaisse.

Indeed, a rich and savoury stew 'tis;
And true philosophers, methinks,
Who love all sorts of natural beauties,
Should love good victuals and good drinks.
And Cordelier or Benedictine
Might gladly sure his lot embrace,
Nor find a fast-day too afflicting
Which served him up a Bouillabaisse.

I wonder if the house still there is?
Yes, here the lamp is, as before;
The smiling red-cheeked écaillère is
Still opening oysters at the door.
Is Terré still alive and able?
I recollect his droll grimace;
He'd come and smile before your table,
And hope you liked your Bouillabaisse.

We enter,—nothing's changed or older.
"How's Monsieur Terré, waiter, pray?"
The waiter stares and shrugs his shoulder,—
"Monsieur is dead this many a day."
"It is the lot of saint and sinner;
So honest Terré's run his race."
"What will Monsieur require for dinner?"
"Say, do you still cook Bouillabaisse?"

"Oh, oui, Monsieur," 's the waiter's answer,
"Quel vin Monsieur désire-t-il?"
"Tell me a good one." "That I can, sir:
The chambertin with yellow seal."
"So Terré's gone," I say, and sink in
My old accustom'd corner-place;
"He's done with feasting and with drinking,
With Burgundy and Bouillabaisse."

My old accustomed corner here is,
The table still is in the nook;
Ah! vanish'd many a busy year is
This well-known chair since last I took.
When first I saw ye, cari luoghi,
I'd scarce a beard upon my face,
And now a grizzled, grim old fogy,
I sit and wait for Bouillabaisse.

Where are you, old companions trusty,
Of early days here met to dine?
Come, waiter! quick, a flagon crusty;
I'll pledge them in the good old wine.
The kind old voices and old faces
My memory can quick retrace;
Around the board they take their places,
And share the wine and Bouillabaisse.

There's Jack has made a wondrous marriage;
There's laughing Tom is laughing yet;
There's brave Augustus drives his carriage;
There's poor old Fred in the *Gazette*;
O'er James's head the grass is growing.
Good Lord! the world has wagged apace
Since here we set the claret flowing,
And drank, and ate the Bouillabaisse.

Ah me! how quick the days are flitting!
I mind me of a time that's gone,
When here I'd sit, as now I'm sitting,
In this same place,—but not alone.
A fair young face was nestled near me,
A dear, dear face looked fondly up,
And sweetly spoke and smiled to cheer me!
There's no one now to share my cup.

* * * *

I drink it as the Fates ordain it.
Come fill it, and have done with rhymes;
Fill up the lonely glass, and drain it
In memory of dear old times.

Welcome the wine, whate'er the seal is;
And sit you down and say your grace
With thankful heart, whate'er the meal is.
Here comes the smoking Bouillabaisse.

I am not disposed to say that Thackeray will hold a high place among English poets. He would have been the first to ridicule such an assumption made on his behalf. But I think that his verses will be more popular than those of many highly reputed poets, and that as years roll on they will gain rather than lose in public estimation.

CHAPTER IX.

THACKERAY'S STYLE AND MANNER OF WORK.

A NOVEL in style should be easy, lucid, and of course grammatical. The same may be said of any book; but that which is intended to recreate should be easily understood,—for which purpose lucid narration is an essential. In matter it should be moral and amusing. In manner it may be realistic, or sublime, or ludicrous;—or it may be all these if the author can combine them. As to Thackeray's performance in style and matter I will say something further on. His manner was mainly realistic, and I will therefore speak first of that mode of expression which was peculiarly his own.

Realism in style has not all the ease which seems to belong to it. It is the object of the author who affects it so to communicate with his reader that all his words shall seem to be natural to the occasion. We do not think the language of Dogberry natural, when he tells neighbour Seacole that "to write and read comes by nature." That is ludicrous. Nor is the language of Hamlet natural when he shows to his mother the portrait of his father;

> See what a grace was seated on this brow;
> Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
> An eye like Mars, to threaten and command.

That is sublime. Constance is natural when she turns away from the Cardinal, declaring that

> He talks to me that never had a son.

In one respect both the sublime and ludicrous are easier than the realistic. They are not required to be true. A man with an imagination and culture may feign either of them without knowing the ways of men. To be realistic you must know accurately that which you describe. How often do we find in novels that the author makes an attempt at realism and falls into a bathos of absurdity, because he cannot use appropriate language? "No human being ever spoke like that," we say to ourselves,—while we should not question the naturalness of the production, either in the grand or the ridiculous.

And yet in very truth the realistic must not be true,—but just so far removed from truth as to suit the erroneous idea of truth which the reader may be supposed to entertain. For were a novelist to narrate a conversation between two persons of fair but not high education, and to use the ill-arranged words and fragments of speech which are really common in such conversations, he would seem to have sunk to the ludicrous, and to be attributing to the interlocutors a mode of language much beneath them. Though in fact true, it would seem to be far from natural. But on the other hand, were he to put words grammatically correct into the mouths of his personages, and to round off and to complete the spoken sentences, the ordinary reader would instantly feel such a style to be stilted and unreal. This reader would not analyse it, but would in some dim but sufficiently critical manner be aware that his author was not providing him with a naturally spoken

dialogue. To produce the desired effect the narrator must go between the two. He must mount somewhat above the ordinary conversational powers of such persons as are to be represented,—lest he disgust. But he must by no means soar into correct phraseology,—lest he offend. The realistic,—by which we mean that which shall seem to be real,—lies between the two, and in reaching it the writer has not only to keep his proper distance on both sides, but has to maintain varying distances in accordance with the position, mode of life, and education of the speakers. Lady Castlewood in *Esmond* would not have been properly made to speak with absolute precision; but she goes nearer to the mark than her more ignorant lord, the viscount; less near, however, than her better-educated kinsman, Henry Esmond. He, however, is not made to speak altogether by the card, or he would be unnatural. Nor would each of them speak always in the same strain, but they would alter their language according to their companion,—according even to the hour of the day. All this the reader unconsciously perceives, and will not think the language to be natural unless the proper variations be there.

In simple narrative the rule is the same as in dialogue, though it does not admit of the same palpable deviation from correct construction. The story of any incident, to be realistic, will admit neither of sesquipedalian grandeur nor of grotesque images. The one gives an idea of romance and the other of burlesque, to neither of which is truth supposed to appertain. We desire to soar frequently, and then we try romance. We desire to recreate ourselves with the easy and droll. Dulce est desipere in loco. Then we have recourse to burlesque. But in neither do we expect human nature.

I cannot but think that in the hands of the novelist the middle course is the most powerful. Much as we may delight in burlesque, we cannot claim for it the power of achieving great results. So much I think will be granted. For the sublime we look rather to poetry than to prose, and though I will give one or two instances just now in which it has been used with great effect in prose fiction, it does not come home to the heart, teaching a lesson, as does the realistic. The girl who reads is touched by Lucy Ashton, but she feels herself to be convinced of the facts as to Jeanie Deans, and asks herself whether she might not emulate them.

Now as to the realism of Thackeray, I must rather appeal to my readers than attempt to prove it by quotation. Whoever it is that speaks in his pages, does it not seem that such a person would certainly have used such words on such an occasion? If there be need of examination to learn whether it be so or not, let the reader study all that falls from the mouth of Lady Castlewood through the novel called *Esmond*, or all that falls from the mouth of Beatrix. They are persons peculiarly situated,—noble women, but who have still lived much out of the world. The former is always conscious of a sorrow; the latter is always striving after an effect;—and both on this account are difficult of management. A period for the story has been chosen which is strange and unknown to us, and which has required a peculiar language. One would have said beforehand that whatever might be the charms of the book, it would not be natural. And yet the ear is never wounded by a tone that is false. It is not always the case that in novel reading the ear should be wounded because the words spoken are unnatural. Bulwer does not wound, though he never puts

into the mouth of any of his persons words such as would have been spoken. They are not expected from him. It is something else that he provides. From Thackeray they are expected,—and from many others. But Thackeray never disappoints. Whether it be a great duke, such as he who was to have married Beatrix, or a mean chaplain, such as Tusher, or Captain Steele the humorist, they talk,—not as they would have talked probably, of which I am no judge,—but as we feel that they might have talked. We find ourselves willing to take it as proved because it is there, which is the strongest possible evidence of the realistic capacity of the writer.

As to the sublime in novels, it is not to be supposed that any very high rank of sublimity is required to put such works within the pale of that definition. I allude to those in which an attempt is made to soar above the ordinary actions and ordinary language of life. We may take as an instance *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. That is intended to be sublime throughout. Even the writer never for a moment thought of descending to real life. She must have been untrue to her own idea of her own business had she done so. It is all stilted,—all of a certain altitude among the clouds. It has been in its time a popular book, and has had its world of readers. Those readers no doubt preferred the diluted romance of Mrs. Radcliff to the condensed realism of Fielding. At any rate they did not look for realism. *Pelham* may be taken as another instance of the sublime, though there is so much in it that is of the world worldly, though an intentional fall to the ludicrous is often made in it. The personages talk in glittering dialogues, throwing about philosophy, science, and the classics, in a manner which is always suggestive and often amusing. The book is

brilliant with intellect. But no word is ever spoken as it would have been spoken;—no detail is ever narrated as it would have occurred. Bulwer no doubt regarded novels as romantic, and would have looked with contempt on any junction of realism and romance, though, in varying his work, he did not think it beneath him to vary his sublimity with the ludicrous. The sublime in novels is no doubt most effective when it breaks out, as though by some burst of nature, in the midst of a story true to life. "If," said Evan Maccombich, "the Saxon gentlemen are laughing because a poor man such as me thinks my life, or the life of six of my degree, is worth that of Vich Ian Vohr, it's like enough they may be very right; but if they laugh because they think I would not keep my word and come back to redeem him, I can tell them they ken neither the heart of a Hielandman nor the honour of a gentleman." That is sublime. And, again, when Balfour of Burley slaughters Bothwell, the death scene is sublime. "Die, bloodthirsty dog!" said Burley. "Die as thou hast lived! Die like the beasts that perish—hoping nothing, believing nothing!"—— "And fearing nothing," said Bothwell. Horrible as is the picture, it is sublime. As is also that speech of Meg Merrilies, as she addresses Mr. Bertram, standing on the bank. "Ride your ways," said the gipsy; "ride your ways, Laird of Ellangowan; ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram. This day have ye quenched seven smoking hearths; see if the fire in your ain parlour burn the blyther for that. Ye have riven the thack off seven cottar houses; look if your ain rooftree stand the faster. Ye may stable your stirks in the shealings at Derncleugh; see that the hare does not couch on the hearthstane at Ellangowan." That is romance, and reaches the very

height of the sublime. That does not offend, impossible though it be that any old woman should have spoken such words, because it does in truth lift the reader up among the bright stars. It is thus that the sublime may be mingled with the realistic, if the writer has the power. Thackeray also rises in that way to a high pitch, though not in many instances. Romance does not often justify to him an absence of truth. The scene between Lady Castlewood and the Duke of Hamilton is one, when she explains to her child's suitor who Henry Esmond is. "My daughter may receive presents from the head of our house," says the lady, speaking up for her kinsman. "My daughter may thankfully take kindness from her father's, her mother's, her brother's dearest friend." The whole scene is of the same nature, and is evidence of Thackeray's capacity for the sublime. And again, when the same lady welcomes the same kinsman on his return from the wars, she rises as high. But as I have already quoted a part of the passage in the chapter on this novel, I will not repeat it here.

It may perhaps be said of the sublime in novels,—which I have endeavoured to describe as not being generally of a high order,—that it is apt to become cold, stilted, and unsatisfactory. What may be done by impossible castles among impossible mountains, peopled by impossible heroes and heroines, and fraught with impossible horrors, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* have shown us. But they require a patient reader, and one who can content himself with a long protracted and most unemotional excitement. The sublimity which is effected by sparkling speeches is better, if the speeches really have something in them beneath the sparkles. Those of Bulwer generally have. Those of his imitators are often without anything, the

sparkles even hardly sparkling. At the best they fatigue; and a novel, if it fatigues, is unpardonable. Its only excuse is to be found in the amusement it affords. It should instruct also, no doubt, but it never will do so unless it hides its instruction and amuses. Scott understood all this, when he allowed himself only such sudden bursts as I have described. Even in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which I do not regard as among the best of his performances, as he soars high into the sublime, so does he descend low into the ludicrous.

In this latter division of pure fiction,—the burlesque, as it is commonly called, or the ludicrous,—Thackeray is quite as much at home as in the realistic, though, the vehicle being less powerful, he has achieved smaller results by it. Manifest as are the objects in his view when he wrote *The Hoggarty Diamond* or *The Legend of the Rhine*, they were less important and less evidently effected than those attempted by *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*. Captain Shindy, the Snob, does not tell us so plainly what is not a gentleman as does Colonel Newcome what is. Nevertheless the ludicrous has, with Thackeray, been very powerful, and very delightful.

In trying to describe what is done by literature of this class, it is especially necessary to remember that different readers are affected in a different way. That which is one man's meat is another man's poison. In the sublime, when the really grand has been reached, it is the reader's own fault if he be not touched. We know that many are indifferent to the soliloquies of Hamlet, but we do not hesitate to declare to ourselves that they are so because they lack the power of appreciating grand language. We do not scruple to attribute to those who are indifferent some inferiority of intelligence. And in regard

to the realistic, when the truth of a well-told story or life-like character does not come home, we think that then, too, there is deficiency in the critical ability. But there is nothing necessarily lacking to a man because he does not enjoy *The Heathen Chinee* or *The Biglow Papers*; and the man to whom these delights of American humour are leather and prunello may be of all the most enraptured by the wit of Sam Weller or the mock piety of Pecksniff. It is a matter of taste and not of intellect, as one man likes caviare after his dinner, while another prefers apple-pie; and the man himself cannot, or, as far as we can see, does not direct his own taste in the one matter more than in the other.

Therefore I cannot ask others to share with me the delight which I have in the various and peculiar expressions of the ludicrous which are common to Thackeray. Some considerable portion of it consists in bad spelling. We may say that Charles James Harrington Fitzroy Yellowplush, or C. FitzJeames De La Pluche, as he is afterwards called, would be nothing but for his "orthogwaphy so carefully inaccuwate." As I have before said, Mrs. Malaprop had seemed to have reached the height of this humour, and in having done so to have made any repetition unpalatable. But Thackeray's studied blundering is altogether different from that of Sheridan. Mrs. Malaprop uses her words in a delightfully wrong sense. Yellowplush would be a very intelligible, if not quite an accurate writer, had he not made for himself special forms of English words altogether new to the eye.

"My ma wrapped up my buth in a mistry. I may be illygitmit; I may have been changed at nus; but I've always had gen'l'm'nly tastes through life, and have no doubt that I come of a gen'l'm'nly origum." We cannot

admit that there is wit, or even humour, in bad spelling alone. Were it not that Yellowplush, with his bad spelling, had so much to say for himself, there would be nothing in it; but there is always a sting of satire directed against some real vice, or some growing vulgarity, which is made sharper by the absurdity of the language. In *The Diary of George IV.* there are the following reflections on a certain correspondence; "Wooden you phansy, now, that the author of such a letter, instead of writun about pipple of tip-top quality, was describin' Vinegar Yard? Would you beleave that the lady he was a-ritin' to was a chased modist lady of honour and mother of a family? *O trumpery! o morris!* as Homer says. This is a higeous pictur of manners, such as I weap to think of, as every morl man must weap." We do not wonder that when he makes his "ajew" he should have been called up to be congratulated on the score of his literary performances by his master, before the Duke, and Lord Bagwig, and Dr. Larner, and "Sawedwadgeorgeearllittnbulwig." All that Yellowplush says or writes are among the pearls which Thackeray was continually scattering abroad.

But this of the distinguished footman was only one of the forms of the ludicrous which he was accustomed to use in the furtherance of some purpose which he had at heart. It was his practice to clothe things most revolting with an assumed grace and dignity, and to add to the weight of his condemnation by the astounding mendacity of the parody thus drawn. There was a grim humour in this which has been displeasing to some, as seeming to hold out to vice a hand which has appeared for too long a time to be friendly. As we are disposed to be not altogether sympathetic with a detective policeman who shall have spent a jolly night with a delinquent, for the

sake of tracing home the suspected guilt to his late comrade, so are some disposed to be almost angry with our author, who seems to be too much at home with his rascals, and to live with them on familiar terms till we doubt whether he does not forget their rascality. *Barry Lyndon* is the strongest example we have of this style of the ludicrous, and the critics of whom I speak have thought that our friendly relations with Barry have been too genial, too apparently genuine, so that it might almost be doubtful whether during the narrative we might not, at this or the other crisis, be rather with him than against him. "After all," the reader might say, on coming to that passage in which Barry defends his trade as a gambler,—a passage which I have quoted in speaking of the novel,—"after all, this man is more hero than scoundrel;" so well is the burlesque humour maintained, so well does the scoundrel hide his own villany. I can easily understand that to some it should seem too long drawn out. To me it seems to be the perfection of humour,—and of philosophy. If such a one as Barry Lyndon, a man full of intellect, can be made thus to love and cherish his vice, and to believe in its beauty, how much more necessary is it to avoid the footsteps which lead to it? But, as I have said above, there is no standard by which to judge of the excellence of the ludicrous as there is of the sublime, and even the realistic.

No writer ever had a stronger proclivity towards parody than Thackeray; and we may, I think, confess that there is no form of literary drollery more dangerous. The parody will often mar the gem of which it coarsely reproduces the outward semblance. The word "damaged," used instead of "damask," has destroyed to my ear for

ever the music of one of the sweetest passages in Shakespeare. But it must be acknowledged of Thackeray that, fond as he is of this branch of humour, he has done little or no injury by his parodies. They run over with fun, but are so contrived that they do not lessen the flavour of the original. I have given in one of the preceding chapters a little set of verses of his own, called *The Willow Tree*, and his own parody on his own work. There the reader may see how effective a parody may be in destroying the sentiment of the piece parodied. But in dealing with other authors he has been grotesque without being severely critical, and has been very like, without making ugly or distasteful that which he has imitated. No one who has admired *Coningsby* will admire it the less because of *Codlingsby*. Nor will the undoubted romance of *Eugene Aram* be lessened in the estimation of any reader of novels by the well-told career of *George de Barnwell*. One may say that to laugh *Ivanhoe* out of face, or to lessen the glory of that immortal story, would be beyond the power of any farcical effect. Thackeray in his *Rowena and Rebecca* certainly had no such purpose. Nothing of *Ivanhoe* is injured, nothing made less valuable than it was before, yet, of all prose parodies in the language, it is perhaps the most perfect. Every character is maintained, every incident has a taste of Scott. It has the twang of *Ivanhoe* from beginning to end, and yet there is not a word in it by which the author of *Ivanhoe* could have been offended. But then there is the purpose beyond that of the mere parody. Prudish women have to be laughed at, and despotic kings, and parasite lords and bishops. The ludicrous alone is but poor fun; but

when the ludicrous has a meaning, it can be very effective in the hands of such a master as this.

> "He to die!" resumed the bishop. "He a mortal like to us! Death was not for him intended, though *communis omnibus*. Keeper, you are irreligious, for to talk and cavil thus!"

So much I have said of the manner in which Thackeray did his work, endeavouring to represent human nature as he saw it, so that his readers should learn to love what is good, and to hate what is evil. As to the merits of his style, it will be necessary to insist on them the less, because it has been generally admitted to be easy, lucid, and grammatical. I call that style easy by which the writer has succeeded in conveying to the reader that which the reader is intended to receive with the least possible amount of trouble to him. I call that style lucid which conveys to the reader most accurately all that the writer wishes to convey on any subject. The two virtues will, I think, be seen to be very different. An author may wish to give an idea that a certain flavour is bitter. He shall leave a conviction that it is simply disagreeable. Then he is not lucid. But he shall convey so much as that, in such a manner as to give the reader no trouble in arriving at the conclusion. Therefore he is easy. The subject here suggested is as little complicated as possible; but in the intercourse which is going on continually between writers and readers, affairs of all degrees of complication are continually being discussed, of a nature so complicated that the inexperienced writer is puzzled at every turn to express himself, and the altogether inartistic writer fails to do so. Who among writers has not to acknowledge that he is often unable to tell all that he has to tell? Words refuse to do it for him. He struggles and stumbles and alters and

adds, but finds at last that he has gone either too far or not quite far enough. Then there comes upon him the necessity of choosing between two evils. He must either give up the fulness of his thought, and content himself with presenting some fragment of it in that lucid arrangement of words which he affects; or he must bring out his thought with ambages; he must mass his sentences inconsequentially; he must struggle up hill almost hopelessly with his phrases,—so that at the end the reader will have to labour as he himself has laboured, or else to leave behind much of the fruit which it has been intended that he should garner. It is the ill-fortune of some to be neither easy or lucid; and there is nothing more wonderful in the history of letters than the patience of readers when called upon to suffer under the double calamity. It is as though a man were reading a dialogue of Plato, understanding neither the subject nor the language. But it is often the case that one has to be sacrificed to the other. The pregnant writer will sometimes solace himself by declaring that it is not his business to supply intelligence to the reader; and then, in throwing out the entirety of his thought, will not stop to remember that he cannot hope to scatter his ideas far and wide unless he can make them easily intelligible. Then the writer who is determined that his book shall not be put down because it is troublesome, is too apt to avoid the knotty bits and shirk the rocky turns, because he cannot with ease to himself make them easy to others. If this be acknowledged, I shall be held to be right in saying not only that ease and lucidity in style are different virtues, but that they are often opposed to each other. They may, however, be combined, and then the writer will have really learned the art of writing. Omne tulit punctum qui

miscuit utile dulci. It is to be done, I believe, in all languages. A man by art and practice shall at least obtain such a masterhood over words as to express all that he thinks, in phrases that shall be easily understood.

In such a small space as can here be allowed, I cannot give instances to prove that this has been achieved by Thackeray. Nor would instances prove the existence of the virtue, though instances might the absence. The proof lies in the work of the man's life, and can only become plain to those who have read his writings. I must refer readers to their own experiences, and ask them whether they have found themselves compelled to study passages in Thackeray in order that they might find a recondite meaning, or whether they have not been sure that they and the author have together understood all that there was to understand in the matter. Have they run backward over the passages, and then gone on, not quite sure what the author has meant? If not, then he has been easy and lucid. We have not had it so easy with all modern writers, nor with all that are old. I may best perhaps explain my meaning by taking something written long ago; something very valuable, in order that I may not damage my argument by comparing the easiness of Thackeray with the harshness of some author who has in other respects failed of obtaining approbation. If you take the play of *Cymbeline* you will, I think, find it to be anything but easy reading. Nor is Shakespeare always lucid. For purposes of his own he will sometimes force his readers to doubt his meaning, even after prolonged study. It has ever been so with *Hamlet*. My readers will not, I think, be so crossgrained with me as to suppose that I am putting Thackeray as a master of style above Shakespeare. I am only endeavouring to explain by

reference to the great master the condition of literary production which he attained. Whatever Thackeray says, the reader cannot fail to understand; and whatever Thackeray attempts to communicate, he succeeds in conveying.

That he is grammatical I must leave to my readers' judgment, with a simple assertion in his favour. There are some who say that grammar,—by which I mean accuracy of composition, in accordance with certain acknowledged rules,—is only a means to an end; and that, if a writer can absolutely achieve the end by some other mode of his own, he need not regard the prescribed means. If a man can so write as to be easily understood, and to convey lucidly that which he has to convey without accuracy of grammar, why should he subject himself to unnecessary trammels? Why not make a path for himself, if the path so made will certainly lead him whither he wishes to go? The answer is, that no other path will lead others whither he wishes to carry them but that which is common to him and to those others. It is necessary that there should be a ground equally familiar to the writer and to his readers. If there be no such common ground, they will certainly not come into full accord. There have been recusants who, by a certain acuteness of their own, have partly done so,—wilful recusants; but they have been recusants, not to the extent of discarding grammar,—which no writer could do and not be altogether in the dark,—but so far as to have created for themselves a phraseology which has been picturesque by reason of its illicit vagaries; as a woman will sometimes please ill-instructed eyes and ears by little departures from feminine propriety. They have probably laboured in their vocation as sedulously as though they had striven to be correct, and have achieved at the best but a

short-lived success;—as is the case also with the unconventional female. The charm of the disorderly soon loses itself in the ugliness of disorder. And there are others rebellious from grammar, who are, however, hardly to be called rebels, because the laws which they break have never been altogether known to them. Among those very dear to me in English literature, one or two might be named of either sort, whose works, though they have that in them which will insure to them a long life, will become from year to year less valuable and less venerable, because their authors have either scorned or have not known that common ground of language on which the author and his readers should stand together. My purport here is only with Thackeray, and I say that he stands always on that common ground. He quarrels with none of the laws. As the lady who is most attentive to conventional propriety may still have her own fashion of dress and her own mode of speech, so had Thackeray very manifestly his own style; but it is one the correctness of which has never been impugned.

I hold that gentleman to be the best dressed whose dress no one observes. I am not sure but that the same may be said of an author's written language. Only, where shall we find an example of such perfection? Always easy, always lucid, always correct, we may find them; but who is the writer, easy, lucid, and correct, who has not impregnated his writing with something of that personal flavour which we call mannerism? To speak of authors well known to all readers—Does not *The Rambler* taste of Johnson; *The Decline and Fall*, of Gibbon; *The Middle Ages*, of Hallam; *The History of England*, of Macaulay; and *The Invasion of the Crimea*, of Kinglake? Do we not know the elephantine tread of *The Saturday*, and the

precise toe of *The Spectator*? I have sometimes thought that Swift has been nearest to the mark of any,—writing English and not writing Swift. But I doubt whether an accurate observer would not trace even here the "mark of the beast." Thackeray, too, has a strong flavour of Thackeray. I am inclined to think that his most besetting sin in style,—the little earmark by which he is most conspicuous,—is a certain affected familiarity. He indulges too frequently in little confidences with individual readers, in which pretended allusions to himself are frequent. "What would you do? what would you say now, if you were in such a position?" he asks. He describes this practice of his in the preface to *Pendennis*. "It is a sort of confidential talk between writer and reader. . . . . In the course of his volubility the perpetual speaker must of necessity lay bare his own weaknesses, vanities, peculiarities." In the short contributions to periodicals on which he tried his 'prentice hand, such addresses and conversations were natural and efficacious; but in a larger work of fiction they cause an absence of that dignity to which even a novel may aspire. You feel that each morsel as you read it is a detached bit, and that it has all been written in detachments. The book is robbed of its integrity by a certain good-humoured geniality of language, which causes the reader to be almost too much at home with his author. There is a saying that familiarity breeds contempt, and I have been sometimes inclined to think that our author has sometimes failed to stand up for himself with sufficiency of "personal deportment."

In other respects Thackeray's style is excellent. As I have said before, the reader always understands his words without an effort, and receives all that the author has to give.

There now remains to be discussed the matter of our author's work. The manner and the style are but the natural wrappings in which the goods have been prepared for the market. Of these goods it is no doubt true that unless the wrappings be in some degree meritorious the article will not be accepted at all; but it is the kernel which we seek, which, if it be not of itself sweet and digestible, cannot be made serviceable by any shell however pretty or easy to be cracked. I have said previously that it is the business of a novel to instruct in morals and to amuse. I will go further, and will add, having been for many years a most prolific writer of novels myself, that I regard him who can put himself into close communication with young people year after year without making some attempt to do them good, as a very sorry fellow indeed. However poor your matter may be, however near you may come to that "foolishest of existing mortals," as Carlyle presumes some unfortunate novelist to be, still, if there be those who read your works, they will undoubtedly be more or less influenced by what they find there. And it is because the novelist amuses that he is thus influential. The sermon too often has no such effect, because it is applied with the declared intention of having it. The palpable and overt dose the child rejects; but that which is cunningly insinuated by the aid of jam or honey is accepted unconsciously, and goes on upon its curative mission. So it is with the novel. It is taken because of its jam and honey. But, unlike the honest simple jam and honey of the household cupboard, it is never unmixed with physic. There will be the dose within it, either curative or poisonous. The girl will be taught modesty or immodesty, truth or falsehood; the lad will be taught honour or dishonour, simplicity or

affectation. Without the lesson the amusement will not be there. There are novels which certainly can teach nothing; but then neither can they amuse any one.

I should be said to insist absurdly on the power of my own confraternity if I were to declare that the bulk of the young people in the upper and middle classes receive their moral teaching chiefly from the novels they read. Mothers would no doubt think of their own sweet teaching; fathers of the examples which they set; and schoolmasters of the excellence of their instructions. Happy is the country that has such mothers, fathers, and schoolmasters! But the novelist creeps in closer than the schoolmaster, closer than the father, closer almost than the mother. He is the chosen guide, the tutor whom the young pupil chooses for herself. She retires with him, suspecting no lesson, safe against rebuke, throwing herself head and heart into the narration as she can hardly do into her task-work; and there she is taught,—how she shall learn to love; how she shall receive the lover when he comes; how far she should advance to meet the joy; why she should be reticent, and not throw herself at once into this new delight. It is the same with the young man, though he would be more prone even than she to reject the suspicion of such tutorship. But he too will there learn either to speak the truth, or to lie; and will receive from his novel lessons either of real manliness, or of that affected apishness and tailor-begotten demeanour which too many professors of the craft give out as their dearest precepts.

At any rate the close intercourse is admitted. Where is the house now from which novels are tabooed? Is it not common to allow them almost indiscriminately, so that young and old each chooses his own novel?

Shall he, then, to whom this close fellowship is allowed, —this inner confidence,—shall he not be careful what words he uses, and what thoughts he expresses, when he sits in council with his young friend? This, which it will certainly be his duty to consider with so much care, will be the matter of his work. We know what was thought of such matter, when Lydia in the play was driven to the necessity of flinging "*Peregrine Pickle* under the toilet," and thrusting "*Lord Aimwell* under the sofa." We have got beyond that now, and are tolerably sure that our girls do not hide their novels. The more freely they are allowed, the more necessary is it that he who supplies shall take care that they are worthy of the trust that is given to them.

Now let the reader ask himself what are the lessons which Thackeray has taught. Let him send his memory running back over all those characters of whom we have just been speaking, and ask himself whether any girl has been taught to be immodest, or any man unmanly, by what Thackeray has written. A novelist has two modes of teaching,—by good example or bad. It is not to be supposed that because the person treated of be evil, therefore the precept will be evil. If so, some personages with whom we have been made well acquainted from our youth upwards, would have been omitted in our early lessons. It may be a question whether the teaching is not more efficacious which comes from the evil example. What story was ever more powerful in showing the beauty of feminine reticence, and the horrors of feminine evil-doing, than the fate of Effie Deans? The Templar would have betrayed a woman to his lust, but has not encouraged others by the freedom of his life. Varney was utterly bad,—but though a gay courtier, he has enticed no others

to go the way that he went. So it has been with Thackeray. His examples have been generally of that kind,—but they have all been efficacious in their teaching on the side of modesty and manliness, truth and simplicity. When some girl shall have traced from first to last the character of Beatrix, what, let us ask, will be the result on her mind? Beatrix was born noble, clever, beautiful, with certain material advantages, which it was within her compass to improve by her nobility, wit, and beauty. She was quite alive to that fact, and thought of those material advantages, to the utter exclusion, in our mind, of any idea of moral goodness. She realised it all, and told herself that that was the game she would play. "Twenty-five!" says she; "and in eight years no man has ever touched my heart!" That is her boast when she is about to be married,—her only boast of herself. "A most detestable young woman!" some will say. "An awful example!" others will add. Not a doubt of it. She proves the misery of her own career so fully that no one will follow it. The example is so awful that it will surely deter. The girl will declare to herself that not in that way will she look for the happiness which she hopes to enjoy; and the young man will say as he reads it, that no Beatrix shall touch his heart.

You may go through all his characters with the same effect. Pendennis will be scorned because he is light; Warrington loved because he is strong and merciful; Dobbin will be honoured because he is unselfish; and the old colonel, though he be foolish, vain, and weak, almost worshipped because he is so true a gentleman. It is in the handling of questions such as these that we have to look for the matter of the novelist,—those moral lessons which he mixes up with his jam and his honey. I say

that with Thackeray the physic is always curative and never poisonous. He may be admitted safely into that close fellowship, and be allowed to accompany the dear ones to their retreats. The girl will never become bold under his preaching, or taught to throw herself at men's heads. Nor will the lad receive a false flashy idea of what becomes a youth, when he is first about to take his place among men.

As to that other question, whether Thackeray be amusing as well as salutary, I must leave it to public opinion. There is now being brought out of his works a more splendid edition than has ever been produced in any age or any country of the writings of such an author. A certain fixed number of copies only is being issued, and each copy will cost £33 12s. when completed. It is understood that a very large proportion of the edition has been already bought or ordered. Cost, it will be said, is a bad test of excellence. It will not prove the merit of a book any more than it will of a horse. But it is proof of the popularity of the book. Print and illustrate and bind up some novels how you will, no one will buy them. Previous to these costly volumes, there have been two entire editions of his works since the author's death, one comparatively cheap and the other dear. Before his death his stories had been scattered in all imaginable forms. I may therefore assert that their charm has been proved by their popularity.

There remains for us only this question,—whether the nature of Thackeray's works entitle him to be called a cynic. The word is one which is always used in a bad sense. "Of a dog; currish," is the definition which we get from Johnson,—quite correctly, and in accordance with its etymology. And he gives us examples. "How vilely

does this cynic rhyme," he takes from Shakespeare; and Addison speaks of a man degenerating into a cynic. That Thackeray's nature was soft and kindly,—gentle almost to a fault,—has been shown elsewhere. But they who have called him a cynic have spoken of him merely as a writer,—and as writer he has certainly taken upon himself the special task of barking at the vices and follies of the world around him. Any satirist might in the same way be called a cynic in so far as his satire goes. Swift was a cynic certainly. Pope was cynical when he was a satirist. Juvenal was all cynical, because he was all satirist. If that be what is meant, Thackeray was certainly a cynic. But that is not all that the word implies. It intends to go back beyond the work of the man, and to describe his heart. It says of any satirist so described that he has given himself up to satire, not because things have been evil, but because he himself has been evil. Hamlet is a satirist, whereas Thersites is a cynic. If Thackeray be judged after this fashion, the word is as inappropriate to the writer as to the man.

But it has to be confessed that Thackeray did allow his intellect to be too thoroughly saturated with the aspect of the ill side of things. We can trace the operation of his mind from his earliest days, when he commenced his parodies at school; when he brought out *The Snob* at Cambridge, when he sent *Yellowplush* out upon the world as a satirist on the doings of gentlemen generally; when he wrote his *Catherine*, to show the vileness of the taste for what he would have called Newgate literature; and *The Hoggarty Diamond*, to attack bubble companies; and *Barry Lyndon*, to expose the pride which a rascal may take in his rascality. Becky Sharp, Major Pendennis, Beatrix, both as a

young and as an old woman, were written with the same purpose. There is a touch of satire in every drawing that he made. A jeer is needed for something that is ridiculous, scorn has to be thrown on something that is vile. The same feeling is to be found in every line of every ballad.

VANITAS VANITATUM.

Methinks the text is never stale,
  And life is every day renewing
Fresh comments on the old old tale,
  Of Folly, Fortune, Glory, Ruin.

Hark to the preacher, preaching still!
  He lifts his voice and cries his sermon,
Here at St. Peter's of Cornhill,
  As yonder on the Mount of Hermon—

For you and me to heart to take
  (O dear beloved brother readers),
To-day,—as when the good king spake
  Beneath the solemn Syrian cedars.

It was just so with him always. He was "crying his sermon," hoping, if it might be so, to do something towards lessening the evils he saw around him. We all preach our sermon, but not always with the same earnestness. He had become so urgent in the cause, so loud in his denunciations, that he did not stop often to speak of the good things around him. Now and again he paused and blessed amid the torrent of his anathemas. There are Dobbin, and Esmond, and Colonel Newcome. But his anathemas are the loudest. It has been so I think nearly always with the eloquent preachers.

I will insert here,—especially here at the end of this

chapter, in which I have spoken of Thackeray's matter and manner of writing, because of the justice of the criticism conveyed,—the lines which Lord Houghton wrote on his death, and which are to be found in the February number of *The Cornhill* of 1864. It was the first number printed after his death. I would add that, though no Dean applied for permission to bury Thackeray in Westminster Abbey, his bust was placed there without delay. What is needed by the nation in such a case is simply a lasting memorial there, where such memorials are most often seen and most highly honoured. But we can all of us sympathise with the feeling of the poet, writing immediately on the loss of such a friend:

When one, whose nervous English verse
  Public and party hates defied,
Who bore and bandied many a curse
  Of angry times,—when Dryden died,

Our royal abbey's Bishop-Dean
  Waited for no suggestive prayer,
But, ere one day closed o'er the scene,
  Craved, as a boon, to lay him there.

The wayward faith, the faulty life,
  Vanished before a nation's pain.
Panther and Hind forgot their strife,
  And rival statesmen thronged the fane.

O gentle censor of our age!
  Prime master of our ampler tongue!
Whose word of wit and generous page
  Were never wrath, except with wrong,—

Fielding—without the manner's dross,
Scott—with a spirit's larger room,
What Prelate deems thy grave his loss?
What Halifax erects thy tomb?

But, may be, he,—who so could draw
The hidden great,—the humble wise,
Yielding with them to God's good law,
Makes the Pantheon where he lies.

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PREFACE.

At the close of a letter addressed by Dickens to his friend John Forster, but not to be found in the English editions of the *Life*, the writer adds to his praises of the biography of Goldsmith these memorable words: "I desire no better for my fame, when my personal dustiness shall be past the control of my love of order, than such a biographer and such a critic." Dickens was a man of few close friendships—"his breast," he said, "would not hold many people;" but of these friendships, that with Forster was one of the earliest, as it was one of the most enduring. To Dickens at least his future biographer must have been the embodiment of two qualities rarely combined in equal measure—discretion and candour. In literary matters his advice was taken almost as often as it was given, and nearly every proof-sheet of nearly every work of Dickens passed through his faithful helpmate's hands. Nor were there many important decisions formed by Dickens concerning himself in the course of his manhood, to which Forster was a stranger, though, unhappily, he more than once counselled in vain.

On Mr. Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, together with the three volumes of *Letters* collected by Dickens' eldest daughter and his sister-in-law—his "dearest and best friend"—it is superfluous to state that the biographical portion of the following essay is mainly based. It may also be superfluous, but it cannot be considered impertinent, if I add that the shortcomings of the *Life* have, in my opinion, been more frequently proclaimed than defined; and that its merits are those of its author as well as of its subject.

My sincere thanks are due for various favours shown to me in connexion with the production of this little volume by

Miss Hogarth, Mr. Charles Dickens, Professor Henry Morley, Mr. Alexander Ireland, Mr. John Evans, Mr. Robinson, and Mr. Britton. Mr. Evans has kindly enabled me to correct some inaccuracies in Mr. Forster's account of Dickens' early Chatham days on unimpeachable first-hand evidence. I also beg Captain and Mrs. Budden to accept my thanks for allowing me to see Gad's Hill Place.

I am under special obligations to Mr. R. F. Sketchley, Librarian of the Dyce and Forster Libraries at South Kensington, for his courtesy in affording me much useful aid and information. With the kind permission of Mrs. Forster, Mr. Sketchley enabled me to supplement the records of Dickens' life, in the period 1838–1841, from a hitherto unpublished source—a series of brief entries by him in four volumes of *The Law and Commercial Daily Remembrancer* for those years. These volumes formed no part of the Forster bequest, but were added to it, under certain conditions, by Mrs. Forster. The entries are mostly very brief; and sometimes there are months without an entry. Many days succeed one another with no other note than "Work."

Mr. R. H. Shepherd's *Bibliography of Dickens* has been of considerable service to me. May I take this opportunity of commending to my readers, as a charming reminiscence of the connexion between *Charles Dickens and Rochester*, Mr. Robert Langton's sketches illustrating a paper recently printed by him under that title?

Last, not least, as the Germans say, I wish to thank my friend Professor T. N. Toller for the friendly counsel which has not been wanting to me on this, any more than on former occasions.

A. W. W.

Manchester, March 1882.

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DICKENS.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE PICKWICK.

1812—1836.

CHARLES DICKENS, the eldest son, and the second of the eight children, of John and Elizabeth Dickens, was born at Landport, a suburb of Portsea, on Friday, February 7th, 1812. His baptismal names were Charles John Huffham. His father, at that time a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, and employed in the Portsmouth Dockyard, was recalled to London when his eldest son was only two years of age; and two years afterwards was transferred to Chatham, where he resided with his family from 1816 to 1821. Thus Chatham, and the more venerable city of Rochester adjoining, with their neighbourhood of chalk hills and deep green lanes and woodland and marshes, became, in the words of Dickens' biographer, the birthplace of his fancy. He looked upon himself as, to all intents and purposes, a Kentish man born and bred, and his heart was always in this particular corner of the incomparable county. Again and again, after Mr. Alfred Jingle's spasmodic eloquence had, in

the very first number of *Pickwick*, epitomised the antiquities and comforts of Rochester, already the scene of one of the *Sketches*, Dickens returned to the local associations of his early childhood. It was at Chatham that poor little David Copperfield, on his solitary tramp to Dover, slept his Sunday night's sleep "near a cannon, happy in the society of the sentry's footsteps;" and in many a Christmas narrative or uncommercial etching the familiar features of town and country, of road and river, were reproduced, before in *Great Expectations* they suggested some of the most picturesque effects of his later art, and before in his last unfinished romance his faithful fancy once more haunted the well-known precincts. During the last thirteen years of his life he was again an inhabitant of the loved neighbourhood where, with the companions of his mirthful idleness, he had so often made holiday; where, when hope was young, he had spent his honeymoon; and whither, after his last restless wanderings, he was to return, to seek such repose as he would allow himself, and to die. But, of course, the daily life of the "very queer small boy" of that early time is only quite incidentally to be associated with the grand gentleman's house on Gad's Hill, where his father, little thinking that his son was to act over again the story of Warren Hastings and Daylesford, had told him he might some day come to live, if he were to be very persevering, and to work hard. The family abode was in Ordnance (not St. Mary's) Place at Chatham, amidst surroundings classified in Mr. Pickwick's notes as "appearing to be soldiers, sailors, Jews, chalk, shrimps, offices, and dockyard men." But though the half-mean half-picturesque aspect of the Chatham streets

may already at an early age have had its fascination for Dickens, yet his childish fancy was fed as fully as were his powers of observation. Having learnt reading from his mother, he was sent with his elder sister, Fanny, to a day-school kept in Gibraltar Place, New Road, by Mr. William Giles, the eldest son and namesake of a worthy Baptist Minister, whose family had formed an intimate acquaintance with their neighbours in Ordnance Row. The younger Giles children were pupils at the school of their elder brother with Charles and Fanny Dickens, and thus naturally their constant playmates. In later life, Dickens preserved a grateful remembrance, at times refreshed by pleasant communications between the families, of the training he had received from Mr. William Giles, an intelligent as well as generous man, who, recognising his pupil's abilities, seems to have resolved that they should not lie fallow for want of early cultivation. Nor does there appear to be the slightest reason for supposing that this period of his life was anything but happy. For his sister Fanny he always preserved a tender regard; and a touching little paper, written by him after her death in womanhood, relates how the two children used to watch the stars together, and make friends with one in particular, as belonging to themselves. But obviously he did not lack playmates of his own sex; and it was no doubt chiefly because his tastes made him disinclined to take much part in the rougher sports of his schoolfellows, that he found plenty of time for amusing himself in his own way. And thus it came to pass that already as a child he followed his own likings in the two directions from which they were never very materially to swerve. He once said of himself that he had been "a writer when a mere baby, an actor always."

Of these two passions he could always, as a child and

as a man, be "happy with either," and occasionally with both at the same time. In his tender years he was taken by a kinsman, a Sandhurst cadet, to the theatre, to see the legitimate drama acted, and was disillusioned by visits behind the scenes at private theatricals; while his own juvenile powers as a teller of stories and singer of comic songs (he was possessed, says one who remembers him, of a sweet treble voice) were displayed on domestic chairs and tables, and then in amateur plays with his schoolfellows. He also wrote a—not strictly original—tragedy, which is missing among his *Reprinted Pieces*. There is nothing unique in these childish doings, nor in the circumstance that he was an eager reader of works of fiction; but it is noteworthy that chief among the books to which he applied himself in a small neglected bookroom in his father's house, were those to which his allegiance remained true through much of his career as an author. Besides books of travel, which he says had a fascination for his mind from his earliest childhood, besides the Arabian Nights and kindred tales, and the English Essayists, he read Fielding and Smollett, and Cervantes and Le Sage, in all innocence of heart, as well as Mrs. Inchbald's collection of farces in all contentment of spirit. Inasmuch as he was no great reader in the days of his authorship, and had to go through hard times of his own before, it was well that the literature of his childhood was good of its kind, and that where it was not good it was at least gay. Dickens afterwards made it an article of his social creed, that the imagination of the young needs nourishment as much as their bodies require food and clothing; and he had reason for gratefully remembering that at all events the imaginative part of his education had escaped neglect.

But these pleasant early days came to a sudden end. In the year 1821 his family returned to London, and soon his experiences of trouble began. Misfortune pursued the elder Dickens to town, his salary having been decreased already at Chatham in consequence of one of the early efforts at economical reform. He found a shabby home for his family in Bayham Street, Camden Town; and here, what with the pecuniary embarrassments in which he was perennially involved, and what with the easy disposition with which he was blessed by way of compensation, he allowed his son's education to take care of itself. John Dickens appears to have been an honourable as well as a kindly man. His son always entertained an affectionate regard for him, and carefully arranged for the comfort of his latter years; nor would it be fair, because of a similarity in their experiences, and in the grandeur of their habitual phraseology, to identify him absolutely with the immortal Mr. Micawber. Still less, except in certain details of manner and incident, can the character of the elder Dickens be thought to have suggested that of the pitiful "Father of the Marshalsea," to which prison, almost as famous in English fiction as it is in English history, the unlucky navy-clerk was consigned a year after his return to London.

Every effort had been made to stave off the evil day; and little Charles, whose eyes were always wide open, and who had begun to write descriptive sketches of odd personages among his acquaintance, had become familiar with the inside of a pawnbroker's shop, and had sold the paternal "library" piecemeal to the original of the drunken second-hand bookseller, with whom David Copperfield dealt as Mr. Micawber's representative. But neither these sacrifices, nor Mrs. Dickens' abortive efforts

at setting up an educational establishment, had been of avail. Her husband's creditors *would not* give him time; and a dark period began for the family, and more especially for the little eldest son, now ten years old, in which, as he afterwards wrote in bitter anguish of remembrance, "but for the mercy of God, he might easily have become, for any care that was taken of him, a little robber or a little vagabond."

Forster has printed the pathetic fragment of autobiography, communicated to him by Dickens five-and-twenty years after the period to which it refers, and subsequently incorporated with but few changes in the *Personal History of David Copperfield*. Who can forget the thrill with which he first learnt the well-kept secret, that the story of the solitary child, left a prey to the cruel chances of the London streets, was an episode in the life of Charles Dickens himself? Between fact and fiction there was but a difference of names. Murdstone and Grinby's wine warehouse down in Blackfriars, was Jonathan Warren's blacking warehouse at Hungerford Stairs, in which a place had been found for the boy by a relative, a partner in the concern; and the bottles he had to paste over with labels were in truth blacking-pots. But the menial work and the miserable pay, the uncongenial companionship during worktime, and the speculative devices of the dinner-hour, were the same in each case. At this time, after his family had settled itself in the Marshalsea, the haven open to the little waif at night was a lodging in Little College Street, Camden Town, presenting even fewer attractions than Mr. Micawber's residence in Windsor Terrace, and kept by a lady, afterwards famous under the name of Mrs. Pipchin. His Sundays were spent at home in the prison.

On his urgent remonstrance—"the first I had ever made about my lot"—concerning the distance from his family at which he was left through the week, a back attic was found for him in Lant Street in the Borough, "where Bob Sawyer lodged many years afterwards;" and he now breakfasted and supped with his parents in their apartment. Here they lived in fair comfort, waited upon by a faithful "orfling," who had accompanied the family and its fortunes from Chatham, and who is said by Forster to have her part in the character of the Marchioness. Finally, after the prisoner had obtained his discharge, and had removed with his family to the Lant Street lodgings, a quarrel occurred between the elder Dickens and his cousin, and the boy was in consequence taken away from the business.

He had not been ill-treated there; nor indeed is it ill-treatment which leads to David Copperfield's running away in the story. Nevertheless, it is not strange that Dickens should have looked back with a bitterness very unusual in him, upon the bad old days of his childish solitude and degradation. He never "forgot" his mother's having wished him to remain in the warehouse; the subject of his employment there was never afterwards mentioned in the family; he could not bring himself to go near old Hungerford Market so long as it remained standing; and to no human being, not even to his wife, did he speak of this passage in his life, until he narrated it in the fragment of autobiography which he confided to his trusty friend. Such a sensitiveness is not hard to explain; for no man is expected to dilate upon the days "when he lived among the beggars in St. Mary Axe," and it is only the Bounderbies of society who exult, truly or falsely, in the sordid memories of the time before they became rich or powerful.

And if the sharp experiences of his childhood might have ceased to be resented by one whom the world on the whole treated so kindly, at least they left his heart unhardened, and helped to make him ever tender to the poor and weak, because he too had after a fashion "eaten his bread with tears" when a puny child.

A happy accident having released the David Copperfield of actual life from his unworthy bondage, he was put in the way of an education such as at that time was the lot of most boys of the class to which he belonged. "The world has done much better since in that way, and will do far better yet," he writes at the close of his description of *Our School*, the "Wellington House Academy," situate near that point in the Hampstead Road where modest gentility and commercial enterprise touch hands. Other testimony confirms his sketch of the ignorant and brutal head-master; and doubtless this worthy and his usher, "considered to know everything as opposed to the chief who was considered to know nothing," furnished some of the features in the portraits of Mr. Creakle and Mr. Mell. But it has been very justly doubted by an old schoolfellow, whether the statement "We were First Boy" is to be regarded as strictly historical. If Charles Dickens, when he entered the school, was "put into Virgil," he was not put there to much purpose. On the other hand, with the return of happier days, had come the resumption of the old amusements which were to grow into the occupations of his life. A club was founded among the boys at Wellington House for the express purpose of circulating short tales written by him, and he was the manager of the private theatricals which they contrived to set on foot.

After two or three years of such work and play it became necessary for Charles Dickens once more to

think of earning his bread. His father, who had probably lost his official post at the time when, in Mr. Micawber's phrase, "hope sunk beneath the horizon," was now seeking employment as a parliamentary reporter, and must have rejoiced when a Gray's Inn solicitor of his acquaintance, attracted by the bright clever looks of his son, took the lad into his office as a clerk at a modest weekly salary. His office associates here were perhaps a grade or two above those of the blacking warehouse; but his danger now lay rather in the direction of the vulgarity which he afterwards depicted in such samples of the profession as Mr. Guppy and Mr. Jobling. He is said to have frequented, in company with a fellow-clerk, one of the minor theatres, and even occasionally to have acted there; and assuredly it must have been personal knowledge which suggested the curiously savage description of *Private Theatres* in the *Sketches by Boz*, the all but solitary *unkindly* reference to theatrical amusements in his works. But whatever his experiences of this kind may have been, he passed unscathed through them; and during the year and a half of his clerkship picked up sufficient knowledge of the technicalities of the law to be able to assail its enormities without falling into rudimentary errors about it, and sufficient knowledge of lawyers and lawyers' men to fill a whole chamber in his gallery of characters.

Oddly enough, it was, after all, the example of the father that led the son into the line of life from which he was easily to pass into the career where success and fame awaited him. The elder Dickens having obtained employment as a parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Herald*, his son, who was living with him in Bentinck Street, Manchester Square, resolved to essay the same laborious craft. He was by this time nearly seventeen years of age, and already we notice in

him what were to remain, through life, two of his most marked characteristics—strength of will, and a determination, if he did a thing at all, to do it thoroughly. The art of shorthand, which he now resolutely set himself to master, was in those days no easy study, though, possibly, in looking back upon his first efforts, David Copperfield overestimated the difficulties which he had conquered with the help of love and Traddles. But Dickens, whose education no Dr. Strong had completed, perceived that in order to succeed as a reporter of the highest class he needed something besides the knowledge of shorthand. In a word, he lacked reading; and this deficiency he set himself to supply as best he could by a constant attendance at the British Museum. Those critics who have dwelt on the fact that the reading of Dickens was neither very great nor very extensive, have insisted on what is not less true than obvious; but he had this one quality of the true lover of reading, that he never professed a familiarity with that of which he knew little or nothing. He continued his visits to the Museum, even when in 1828 he had become a reporter in Doctors' Commons. With this occupation he had to remain as content as he could for nearly two years. Once more David Copperfield, the double of Charles Dickens in his youth, will rise to the memory of every one of his readers. For not only was his soul seized with a weariness of Consistory, Arches, Delegates, and the rest of it, to which he afterwards gave elaborate expression in his story, but his heart was full of its first love. In later days, he was not of opinion that he had loved particularly wisely; but how well he had loved is known to everyone who after him has lost his heart to Dora. Nothing came of the fancy, and in course of time he had composure enough to visit the lady who had been its

object in the company of his wife. He found that Jip was stuffed as well as dead, and that Dora had faded into Flora; for it was as such that, not very chivalrously, he could bring himself to describe her, for the second time, in *Little Dorrit*.

Before at last he was engaged as a reporter on a newspaper, he had, and not for a moment only, thought of turning aside to another profession. It was the profession to which—uncommercially—he was attached during so great a part of his life, that when he afterwards created for himself a stage of his own, he seemed to be but following an irresistible fascination. His best friend described him to me as "a born actor;" and who needs to be told that the world falls into two divisions only—those whose place is before the footlights, and those whose place is behind them? His love of acting was stronger than himself; and I doubt whether he ever saw a play successfully performed without longing to be in and of it. "Assumption," he wrote in after days to Lord Lytton, "has charms for me—I hardly know for how many wild reasons—so delightful that I feel a loss of, oh! I can't say what exquisite foolery, when I lose a chance of being someone in voice, etc. not at all like myself." He loved the theatre and everything which savoured of histrionics with an intensity not even to be imagined by those who have never felt a touch of the same passion. He had that "belief in a play" which he so pleasantly described as one of the characteristics of his lifelong friend, the great painter Clarkson Stanfield. And he had that unextinguishable interest in both actors and acting which makes a little separate world of the "quality." One of the stanchest friendships of his life was that with the foremost English tragedian of his age, Macready; one of the

delights of his last years was his intimacy with another well-known actor, the late Mr. Fechter. No performer, however, was so obscure or so feeble as to be outside the pale of his sympathy. His books teem with kindly likenesses of all manner of entertainers and entertainments—from Mr. Vincent Crummles and the more or less legitimate drama, down to Mr. Sleary's horse-riding and Mrs. Jarley's wax-work. He has a friendly feeling for Chops the dwarf, and for Pickleson the giant; and in his own quiet Broadstairs he cannot help tumultuously applauding a young lady "who goes into the den of ferocious lions, tigers, leopards, etc. and pretends to go to sleep upon the principal lion, upon which a rustic keeper, who speaks through his nose, exclaims: 'Behold the abazid power of woobad!'" He was unable to sit through a forlorn performance at a wretched country theatre, without longing to add a sovereign to the four and ninepence which he had made out in the house when he entered, and which "had warmed up in the course of the evening to twelve shillings;" and in Bow Street, near his office, he was beset by appeals such as that of an aged and greasy suitor for an engagement as Pantaloon: "Mr. Dickens, you know our profession, sir—no one knows it better, sir—there is no right feeling in it. I was Harlequin on your own circuit, sir, for five-and-thirty years, and was displaced by a boy, sir! —a boy!" Nor did his disposition change when he crossed the seas; the streets he first sees in the United States remind him irresistibly of the set-scene in a London pantomime; and at Verona his interest is divided between *Romeo and Juliet* and the vestiges of an equestrian troupe in the amphitheatre.

What success Dickens might have achieved as an actor

it is hardly to the present purpose to inquire. A word will be said below of the success he achieved as an amateur actor and manager, and in his more than half dramatic readings. But, the influence of early associations and personal feelings apart, it would seem that the artists of the stage whom he most admired were not those of the highest type. He was subdued by the genius of Frédéric Lemaître, but blind and deaf to that of Ristori. "Sound melodrama and farce" were the dramatic species which he affected, and in which as a professional actor he might have excelled. His intensity might have gone for much in the one, and his versatility and volubility for more in the other; and in both, as indeed in any kind of play or part, his thoroughness, which extended itself to every detail of performance or make-up, must have stood him in excellent stead. As it was, he was preserved for literature. But he had carefully prepared himself for his intended venture, and when he sought an engagement at Covent Garden, a preliminary interview with the manager was postponed only on account of the illness of the applicant.

Before the next theatrical season opened, he had at last —in the year 1831—obtained employment as a parliamentary reporter, and after some earlier engagements he became, in 1834, one of the reporting staff of the famous Whig *Morning Chronicle*, then in its best days under the editorship of Mr. John Black. Now, for the first time in his life, he had an opportunity of putting forth the energy that was in him. He shrank from none of the difficulties which in those days attended the exercise of his craft. They were thus depicted by himself, when a few years before his death he "held a brief for his brothers" at the dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund: "I have often transcribed for the printer from my

shorthand notes important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising; writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. . . . I have worn my knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we used to be huddled together like so many sheep kept in waiting, say, until the woolsack might want re-stuffing. Returning home from excited political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been in my time belated on miry by-roads, towards the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken postboys, and have got back in time for publication, to be received with never-forgotten compliments by the late Mr. Black, coming in the broadest of Scotch from the broadest of hearts I ever knew." Thus early had Dickens learnt the secret of throwing himself into any pursuit once taken up by him, and of half achieving his task by the very heartiness with which he set about it. When at the close of the parliamentary session of the year 1836 his labours as a reporter came to an end, he was held to have no equal in the gallery. During this period his naturally keen powers of observation must have been sharpened and strengthened, and that quickness of decision acquired which constitutes, perhaps, the most valuable lesson that journalistic practice of any kind can

teach to a young man of letters. To Dickens' experience as a reporter may likewise be traced no small part of his political creed, in which there was a good deal of infidelity; or at all events, his determined contempt for the parliamentary style proper, whether in the mouth of "Thisman" or of "Thatman," and his rooted dislike of the "cheap-jacks" and "national dustmen" whom he discerned among our orators and legislators. There is probably no very great number of Members of Parliament who are heroes to those who wait attendance on their words. Moreover, the period of Dickens' most active labours as a reporter was one that succeeded a time of great political excitement; and when men wish thankfully to rest after deeds, words are in season.

Meanwhile, very tentatively and with a very imperfect consciousness of the significance for himself of his first steps on a slippery path, Dickens had begun the real career of his life. It has been seen how he had been a writer as a "baby," as a schoolboy, and as a lawyer's clerk, and the time had come when, like all writers, he wished to see himself in print. In December, 1833, the *Monthly Magazine* published a paper which he had dropped into its letter-box, and with eyes "dimmed with joy and pride" the young author beheld his firstborn in print. The paper, called *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*, was afterwards reprinted in the *Sketches by Boz* under the title of *Mr. Minns and his Cousin*, and is laughable enough. His success emboldened him to send further papers of a similar character to the same magazine, which published ten contributions of his by February, 1835. That which appeared in August, 1834, was the first signed "Boz," a nickname given by him in his boyhood to a favourite brother. Since Dickens used this signature

not only as the author of the *Sketches* and a few other minor productions, but also as "editor" of the *Pickwick Papers*, it is not surprising that, especially among his admirers on the Continent and in America, the name should have clung to him so tenaciously. It was on a steamboat near Niagara that he heard from his state-room a gentleman complaining to his wife: "Boz keeps himself very close."

But the *Monthly Magazine*, though warmly welcoming its young contributor's lively sketches, could not afford to pay for them. He was therefore glad to conclude an arrangement with Mr. George Hogarth, the conductor of the *Evening Chronicle*, a paper in connexion with the great morning journal on the reporting staff of which he was engaged. He had gratuitously contributed a sketch to the evening paper as a personal favour to Mr. Hogarth, and the latter readily proposed to the proprietors of the *Morning Chronicle* that Dickens should be duly remunerated for this addition to his regular labours. With a salary of seven instead of, as heretofore, five guineas a-week, and settled in chambers in Furnival's Inn—one of those old legal inns which he loved so well—he might already in this year, 1835, consider himself on the high-road to prosperity. By the beginning of 1836 the *Sketches by Boz* printed in the *Evening Chronicle* were already numerous enough, and their success was sufficiently established to allow of his arranging for their republication. They appeared in two volumes, with woodcuts by Cruikshank, and the sum of a hundred and fifty pounds was paid to him for the copyright. The stepping-stones had been found and passed, and on the last day of March, which saw the publication of the first number of the *Pickwick Papers*, he stood in the field of fame

and fortune. Three days afterwards Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, the eldest daughter of the friend who had so efficiently aided him in his early literary ventures. Mr. George Hogarth's name thus links together the names of two masters of English fiction; for Lockhart speaks of him when a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh as one of the intimate friends of Scott. Dickens' apprenticeship as an author was over almost as soon as it was begun; and he had found the way short from obscurity to the dazzling light of popularity. As for the *Sketches by Boz*, their author soon repurchased the copyright for more than thirteen times the sum which had been paid to him for it.

In their collected form these *Sketches* modestly described themselves as "illustrative of every-day life and every-day people." Herein they only prefigured the more famous creations of their writer, whose genius was never so happy as when lighting up, now the humorous, now what he chose to term the romantic side of familiar things. The curious will find little difficulty in tracing in these outlines, often rough and at times coarse, the groundwork of more than one finished picture of later date. Not a few of the most peculiar features of Dickens humour are already here, together with not a little of his most characteristic pathos. It is true that in these early *Sketches* the latter is at times strained, but its power is occasionally beyond denial, as, for instance, in the brief narrative of the death of the hospital patient. On the other hand, the humour—more especially that of the *Tales*—is not of the most refined sort, and often degenerates in the direction of boisterous farce. The style, too, though in general devoid of the pretentiousness which is the bane of "light" journalistic writing, has

a taint of vulgarity about it, very pardonable under the circumstances, but generally absent from Dickens' later works. Weak puns are not unfrequent; and the diction but rarely reaches that exquisite felicity of comic phrase in which *Pickwick* and its successors excel. For the rest, Dickens' favourite passions and favourite aversions alike reflect themselves here in small. In the description of the Election for Beadle he ridicules the tricks and the manners of political party-life, and his love of things theatrical has its full freshness upon it,—however he may pretend at Astley's that his "histrionic taste is gone," and that it is the audience which chiefly delights him. But of course the gift which these *Sketches* pre-eminently revealed in their author was a descriptive power that seemed to lose sight of nothing characteristic in the object described, and of nothing humorous in an association suggested by it. Whether his theme was street or river, a Christmas dinner or the extensive groves of the illustrious dead (the old clothes' shops in Monmouth Street), he reproduced it in all its shades and colours, and under a hundred aspects, fanciful as well as real. How inimitable, for instance, is the sketch of "the last cab-driver, and the first omnibus cad," whose earlier vehicle, the omnipresent "red cab," was not the gondola, but the very fire-ship of the London streets.

Dickens himself entertained no high opinion of these youthful efforts; and in this he showed the consciousness of the true artist, that masterpieces are rarely thrown off at hazard. But though much of the popularity of the *Sketches* may be accounted for by the fact that commonplace people love to read about commonplace people and things, the greater part of it is due to genuine literary merit. The days of half-price in theatres have followed the

days of coaching; "Honest Tom" no more paces the lobby in a black coat with velvet facings and cuffs, and a D'Orsay hat; the Hickses of the present time no longer quote "Don Juan" over boarding-house dinner-tables; and the young ladies in Camberwell no longer compare young men in attitudes to Lord Byron, or to "Satan" Montgomery. But the *Sketches by Boz* have survived their birth-time; and they deserve to be remembered among the rare instances in which a young author has no sooner begun to write, than he has shown a knowledge of his real strength. As yet, however, this sudden favourite of the public was unaware of the range to which his powers were to extend, and of the height to which they were to mount.

CHAPTER II.

FROM SUCCESS TO SUCCESS.

1836—1841.

EVEN in those years of which the record is brightest in the story of his life, Charles Dickens, like the rest of the world, had his share of troubles—troubles great and small, losses which went home to his heart, and vexations manifold in the way of business. But in the history of his early career as an author, the word failure has no place.

Not that the *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, published as they were in monthly numbers, at once took the town by storm; for the public needed two or three months to make up its mind that "Boz" was equal to an effort considerably in advance of his *Sketches*. But when the popularity of the serial was once established, it grew with extraordinary rapidity until it reached an altogether unprecedented height. He would be a bold man who should declare that its popularity has very materially diminished at the present day. Against the seductions of *Pickwick* and of other works of amusement of which it was the prototype, Dr. Arnold thought himself bound seriously to contend among the boys of Rugby; and twenty years later young men at the university talked nothing but *Pickwick*, and quoted nothing but *Pickwick*, and the wittiest of undergraduates set the world at large

an examination paper in *Pickwick*, over which pretentious half-knowledge may puzzle, unable accurately to "describe the common Profeel-machine," or to furnish a satisfactory definition of "a red-faced Nixon." No changes in manners and customs have interfered with the hold of the work upon nearly all classes of readers at home; and no translation has been dull enough to prevent its being relished even in countries where all English manners and customs must seem equally uninteresting or equally absurd.

So extraordinary has been the popularity of this more than thrice fortunate book, that the wildest legends have grown up as to the history of its origin. The facts, however, as stated by Dickens himself, are few and plain. Attracted by the success of the *Sketches*, Messrs. Chapman and Hall proposed to him that he should write "something" in monthly numbers to serve as a vehicle for certain plates to be executed by the comic draughtsman, Mr. R. Seymour; and either the publishers or the artist suggested as a kind of leading notion, the idea of a "Nimrod Club" of unlucky sportsmen. The proposition was at Dickens' suggestion so modified that the plates were "to arise naturally out of the text," the range of the latter being left open to him. This explains why the rather artificial machinery of a club was maintained, and why Mr. Winkle's misfortunes by flood and field hold their place by the side of the philanthropical meanderings of Mr. Pickwick and the amorous experiences of Mr. Tupman. An original was speedily found for the pictorial presentment of the hero of the book, and a felicitous name for him soon suggested itself. Only a single number of the serial had appeared when Mr. Seymour's own hand put an end to his life. It is well known that among the applicants for the vacant office of illustrator of the *Pickwick*

Papers was Thackeray—the senior of Dickens by a few months—whose style as a draughtsman would have been singularly unsuited to the adventures and the gaiters of Mr. Pickwick. Finally, in no altogether propitious hour for some of Dickens' books, Mr. Hablot Browne ("Phiz") was chosen as illustrator. Some happy hits—such as the figure of Mr. Micawber—apart, the illustrations of Dickens by this artist, though often both imaginative and effective, are apt, on the one hand, to obscure the author's fidelity to nature, and on the other, to intensify his unreality. *Oliver Twist*, like the *Sketches*, was illustrated by George Cruikshank, a pencil humourist of no common calibre, but as a rule ugly with the whole virtuous intention of his heart. Dickens himself was never so well satisfied with any illustrator as with George Cattermole (*alias* "Kittenmoles"), a connexion of his by marriage, who co-operated with Hablot Browne in *Master Humphrey's Clock*; in his latest works he resorted to the aid of younger artists, whose reputation has since justified his confidence. The most congenial of the pictorial interpreters of Dickens, in his brightest and freshest humour, was his valued friend John Leech, whose services, together occasionally with those of Doyle, Frank Stone, and Tenniel, as well as of his faithful Stanfield and Maclise, he secured for his Christmas books.

The *Pickwick Papers*, of which the issue was completed by the end of 1837, brought in to Dickens a large sum of money, and after a time a handsome annual income. On the whole this has remained the most general favourite of all his books. Yet it is not for this reason only that *Pickwick* defies criticism, but also because the circumstances under

which the book was begun and carried on make it preposterous to judge it by canons applicable to its author's subsequent fictions. As the serial proceeded, the interest which was to be divided between the inserted tales, some of which have real merit, and the framework, was absorbed by the latter. The rise in the style of the book can almost be measured by the change in the treatment of its chief character, Mr. Pickwick himself. In a later preface, Dickens endeavoured to illustrate this change by the analogy of real life. The truth of course is, that it was only as the author proceeded that he recognised the capabilities of the character, and his own power of making it, and his book with it, truly loveable as well as laughable. Thus, on the very same page in which Mr. Pickwick proves himself a true gentleman in his leave-taking from Mr. Nupkins, there follows a little bit of the idyll between Sam and the pretty housemaid, written with a delicacy that could hardly have been suspected in the chronicler of the experiences of Miss Jemima Evans or of Mr. Augustus Cooper. In the subsequent part of the main narrative will be found exemplified nearly all the varieties of pathos of which Dickens was afterwards so repeatedly to prove himself master, more especially of course in those prison scenes for which some of our older novelists may have furnished him with hints. Even that subtle species of humour is not wanting which is content to miss its effect with the less attentive reader; as in this passage concerning the ruined cobbler's confidences to Sam in the Fleet:

> The cobbler paused to ascertain what effect his story had produced on Sam; but finding that he had dropped asleep, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, *sighed*, put it down, drew the bedclothes over his head, and went to sleep too.

Goldsmith himself could not have put more of pathos and more of irony into a single word.

But it may seem out of place to dwell upon details such as this in view of the broad and universally acknowledged comic effects of this masterpiece of English humour. Its many genuinely comic characters are as broadly marked as the heroes of the least refined of sporting novels, and as true to nature as the most elaborated products of Addison's art. The author's humour is certainly not one which eschews simple in favour of subtle means, or which is averse from occasional desipience in the form of the wildest farce. Mrs. Leo Hunter's garden party—or rather "public breakfast"—at The Den, Eatanswill; Mr. Pickwick's nocturnal descent, through three gooseberry bushes and a rose-tree, upon the virgin soil of Miss Tomkins' establishment for young ladies; the *supplice d'un homme* of Mr. Pott; Mr. Weller junior's love-letter, with notes and comments by Mr. Weller senior, and Mr. Weller senior's own letter of affliction written by somebody else; the footmen's "swarry" at Bath, and Mr. Bob Sawyer's bachelors' party in the Borough;—all these and many other scenes and passages have in them that jovial element of exaggeration which nobody mistakes and nobody resents. Whose duty is it to check the volubility of Mr. Alfred Jingle, or to weigh the heaviness, *quot libras*, of the Fat Boy? Everyone is conscious of the fact that in the contagious high spirits of the author lies one of the chief charms of the book. Not, however, that the effect produced is obtained without the assistance of a very vigilant art. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the character which is upon the whole the most brilliant of the many brilliant additions which the author made to his original group of

personages. If there is nothing so humorous in the book as Sam Weller, neither is there in it anything more pathetic than the relation between him and his master. As for Sam Weller's style of speech, scant justice was done to it by Mr. Pickwick when he observed to Job Trotter, "my man is in the right, although his mode of expressing his opinion is somewhat homely, and occasionally incomprehensible." The fashion of Sam's gnomic philosophy is at least as old as Theocritus;[1] but the special impress which he has given to it is his own, rudely foreshadowed perhaps in some of the apophthegms of his father. Incidental Sam Wellerisms in *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* show how enduring a hold the whimsical fancy had taken of its creator. For the rest, the freshness of the book continues the same to the end; and farcical as are some of the closing scenes—those, for instance, in which a chorus of coachmen attends the movements of the elder Mr. Weller—there is even here no straining after effect. An exception might perhaps be found in the catastrophe of the Shepherd, which is coarsely contrived; but the fun of the character is in itself neither illegitimate nor unwholesome. It will be observed below that it is the constant harping on the same string, the repeated picturing of professional preachers of religion as gross and greasy scoundrels, which in the end becomes offensive in Dickens.

On the whole, no hero has ever more appropriately bidden farewell to his labours than Mr. Pickwick in the words which he uttered at the table of the ever-hospitable Mr. Wardle at the Adelphi.

[1] See *Idyll.* xv. 77. This discovery is not my own, but that of the late Dr. Donaldson, who used to translate the passage accordingly with great gusto.

"I shall never regret," said Mr. Pickwick in a low voice, "I shall never regret having devoted the greater part of two years to mixing with different varieties and shades of human character; frivolous as my pursuit of novelty may appear to many. Nearly the whole of my previous life having been devoted to business and the pursuit of wealth, numerous scenes of which I had no previous conception have dawned upon me—I hope to the enlargement of my mind, and to the improvement of my understanding. If I have done but little good, I trust I have done less harm, and that none of my adventures will be other than a source of amusing and pleasant recollection to me in the decline of life. God bless you all."

Of course Mr. Pickwick "filled and drained a bumper" to the sentiment. Indeed, it "snoweth" in this book "of meat and drink." Wine, ale, and brandy abound there, and viands to which ample justice is invariably done—even under Mr. Tupman's heartrending circumstances at the (now, alas! degenerate) Leather Bottle. Something of this is due to the times in which the work was composed, and to the class of readers for which we may suppose it in the first instance to have been intended; but Dickens, though a temperate man, loved the paraphernalia of good cheer, besides cherishing the associations which are inseparable from it. At the same time, there is a little too much of it in the *Pickwick Papers*, however well its presence may consort with the geniality which pervades them. It is difficult to turn any page of the book without chancing on one of those supremely felicitous phrases in the ready mintage of which Dickens at all times excelled. But its chief attraction lies in the spirit of the whole—that spirit of true humour, which calls forth at once merriment, good will, and charity.

In the year 1836, which the commencement of the *Pickwick Papers* has made memorable in the history of English literature, Dickens was already in the full tide of

authorship. In February, 1837, the second number of *Bentley's Miscellany*, a new monthly magazine which he had undertaken to edit, contained the opening chapters of his story of *Oliver Twist*. Shortly before this, in September and December, 1836, he had essayed two of the least ambitious branches of dramatic authorship. The acting of Harley, an admirable dry comedian, gave some vitality to *The Strange Gentleman*, a "comic burletta," or farce, in two acts, founded upon the tale in the *Sketches* called *The Great Winglebury Duel*. It ran for seventy nights at Drury Lane, and, in its author's opinion, was "the best thing Harley did." But the adaptation has no special feature distinguishing it from the original, unless it be the effective bustle of the opening. *The Village Coquettes*, an operetta represented at the St. James's Theatre, with music by Hullah, was an equally unpretending effort. In this piece Harley took one part, that of "a very small farmer with a very large circle of intimate friends," and John Parry made his *début* on the London stage in another. To quote any of the songs in this operetta would be very unfair to Dickens.[1] He was not at all depressed by the unfavourable criticisms which were passed upon his libretto, and against which he had to set the round declaration of Braham, that there had been "no such music since the days of Shield, and no such piece since *The Duenna*." As time went on, however, he became anything but proud of his juvenile productions as a dramatist, and strongly objected to their revival. His third and last attempt of this kind,

[1] For operas, as a form of *dramatic* entertainment, Dickens seems afterwards to have entertained a strong contempt, such as, indeed, it is difficult for any man with a sense of humour wholly to avoid.

a farce called *The Lamplighter*, which he wrote for Covent Garden in 1838, was never acted, having been withdrawn by Macready's wish; and in 1841 Dickens converted it into a story printed among the *Pic-Nic Papers*, a collection generously edited by him for the benefit of the widow and children of a publisher towards whom he had little cause for personal gratitude. His friendship for Macready kept alive in him for some time the desire to write a comedy worthy of so distinguished an actor; and, according to his wont, he had even chosen beforehand for the piece a name which he was not to forget—*No Thoroughfare*. But the genius of the age, an influence which is often stronger than personal wishes or inclinations, diverted him from dramatic composition. He would have been equally unwilling to see mentioned among his literary works the *Life of Grimaldi*, which he merely edited, and which must be numbered among forgotten memorials of forgotten greatness.

To the earlier part of 1838 belong one or two other publications, which their author never cared to reprint. The first of these, however, a short pamphlet entitled *Sunday under Three Heads*, is not without a certain biographical interest. This little book was written with immediate reference to a bill "for the better observance of the Sabbath," which the House of Commons had recently thrown out by a small majority; and its special purpose was the advocacy of Sunday excursions, and harmless Sunday amusements, in lieu of the alternate gloom and drunkenness distinguishing what Dickens called a London *Sunday as it is*. His own love of fresh air and brightness intensified his hatred of a formalism which shuts its ears to argument. In the powerful picture of a Sunday evening in London, "gloomy, close, and stale,"

which he afterwards drew in *Little Dorrit*, he almost seems to hold Sabbatarianism and the weather responsible for one another. When he afterwards saw a Parisian Sunday, he thought it "not comfortable," so that, like others who hate bigotry, he may perhaps have come to recognise the difficulty of arranging an English *Sunday as it might be made*. On the other hand, he may have remembered his youthful fancy of the good clergyman encouraging a game of cricket after church, when thirty years later, writing from Edinburgh, he playfully pictured the counterpart of *Sunday as Sabbath bills would have it*: describing how "the usual preparations are making for the band in the open air in the afternoon, and the usual pretty children (selected for that purpose), are at this moment hanging garlands round the Scott monument preparatory to the innocent Sunday dance round that edifice, with which the diversions invariably close." The *Sketches of Young Gentlemen*, published in the same year, are little if at all in advance of the earlier *Sketches by Boz*, and were evidently written to order. He finished them in precisely a fortnight, and noted in his diary that "one hundred and twenty-five pounds for such a book, without any name to it, is pretty well." The *Sketches of Young Couples*, which followed as late as 1840, have the advantage of a facetious introduction, suggested by Her Majesty's own announcement of her approaching marriage. But the life has long gone out of these pleasantries, as it has from others of the same cast, in which many a mirthful spirit, forced to coin its mirth into money, has ere now spent itself.

It was the better fortune of Dickens to be able almost from the first to keep nearly all his writings on a level with his powers. He never made a bolder step forwards

than when, in the very midst of the production of *Pickwick*, he began his first long continuous story, the *Adventures of Oliver Twist*. Those who have looked at the MS. of this famous novel will remember the vigour of the handwriting, and how few, in comparison with his later MSS., are the additions and obliterations which it exhibits. But here and there the writing shows traces of excitement; for the author's heart was in his work, and much of it, contrary to his later habit, was written at night. No doubt he was upheld in the labour of authorship by something besides ambition and consciousness of strength. *Oliver Twist* was certainly written *with a purpose*, and with one that was afterwards avowed. The author intended to put before his readers—"so long as their speech did not offend the ear"—a picture of "dregs of life," hitherto, as he believed, never exhibited by any novelist in their loathsome reality. Yet the old masters of fiction, Fielding in particular, as well as the old master of the brush whom Dickens cites (Hogarth), had not shrunk from the path which their disciple now essayed. Dickens, however, was naturally thinking of his own generation, which had already relished *Paul Clifford*, and which was not to be debarred from exciting itself over *Jack Sheppard*, begun before *Oliver Twist* had been completed, and in the selfsame magazine. Dickens' purpose was an honest and a praiseworthy one. But the most powerful and at the same time the most loveable element in his genius suggested the silver lining to the cloud. To that unfailing power of sympathy which was the mainspring of both his most affecting and his most humorous touches, we owe the redeeming features in his company of criminals; not only the devotion and the heroism of Nancy, but the irresistible vivacity of the Artful Dodger,

and the good-humour of Charley Bates, which moved Talfourd to "plead as earnestly in mitigation of judgment" against him as ever he had done "at the bar for any client he most respected." Other parts of the story were less carefully tempered. Mr. Fang, the police-magistrate, appears to have been a rather hasty portrait of a living original; and the whole picture of Bumble and Bumbledom was certainly a caricature of the working of the new Poor-Law, confounding the question of its merits and demerits with that of its occasional maladministration. On the other hand, a vein of truest pathos runs through the whole of poor Nancy's story, and adds to the effect of a marvellously powerful catastrophe. From Nancy's interview with Rose at London Bridge to the closing scenes, the flight of Sikes, his death at Jacob's Island, and the end of the Jew, the action has an intensity rare in the literature of the terrible. By the side of this genuine tragic force, which perhaps it would be easiest to parallel from some of the "low" domestic tragedy of the Elizabethans, the author's comic humour burst forth upon the world in a variety of entirely new types: Bumble and his partner; Noah Claypole, complete in himself, but full of promise for Uriah Heep; and the Jew, with all the pupils and supporters of his establishment of technical education. Undeniably the story of *Oliver Twist* also contains much that is artificial and stilted, with much that is weak and (the author of *Endymion* is to be thanked for the word) "gushy." Thus, all the Maylie scenes, down to the last in which Oliver discreetly "glides" away from the lovers, are barely endurable. But, whatever its shortcomings, *Oliver Twist* remains an almost unique example of a young author's brilliant success in an enterprise of complete novelty and extreme difficulty.

Some of its situations continue to exercise their power even over readers already familiarly acquainted with them; and some of its characters will live by the side of Dickens' happiest and most finished creations. Even had a sapient critic been right who declared during the progress of the story, that Mr. Dickens appeared to have worked out "the particular vein of humour which had hitherto yielded so much attractive metal," it would have been worked out to some purpose. After making his readers merry with *Pickwick*, he had thrilled them with *Oliver Twist*; and by the one book as by the other, he had made them think better of mankind.

But neither had his vein been worked out, nor was his hand content with a single task. In April, 1838, several months before the completion of *Oliver Twist*, the first number of *Nicholas Nickleby* appeared; and while engaged upon the composition of these books he contributed to *Bentley's Miscellany*, of which he retained the editorship till the early part of 1839, several smaller articles. Of these, the *Mudfog Papers* have been recently thought worth reprinting; but even supposing the satire against the Association for the Advancement of Everything to have not yet altogether lost its savour, the fun of the day before yesterday refuses to be revived. *Nicholas Nickleby*, published in twenty numbers, was the labour of many months, but was produced under so great a press of work that during the whole time of publication Dickens was never a single number in advance. Yet, though not one of the most perfect of his books, it is indisputably one of the most thoroughly original, and signally illustrates the absurdity of recent attempts to draw a distinction between the imaginative romance of the past and the realistic novel of

the present. Dickens was never so strong as when he produced from the real; and in this instance,—starting, no doubt, with a healthy prejudice,—so carefully had he inspected the neighbourhood of the Yorkshire schools, of which Dotheboys Hall was to be held up as the infamous type, that there seems to be no difficulty in identifying the site of the very school itself; while the Portsmouth Theatre is to the full as accurate a study as the Yorkshire school. So, again, as everyone knows, the Brothers Cheeryble were real personages well known in Manchester,[1] where even the original of Tim Linkinwater still survives in local remembrance. On the other hand, with how conscious a strength has the author's imaginative power used and transmuted his materials: in the Squeers family, creating a group of inimitable grotesqueness; in their humblest victim Smike giving one of his earliest pictures of those outcasts whom he drew again and again with such infinite tenderness; and in Mr. Vincent Crummles and his company, including the Phenomenon, establishing a jest, but a kindly one, for all times! In a third series of episodes in this book, it is universally agreed that the author has no less conspicuously failed. Dickens' first attempt to picture the manners and customs of the aristocracy certainly resulted in portraying some very peculiar people. Lord Frederick Verisopht, indeed—who is allowed to redeem his character in the end—is not without touches resembling nature.

"I take an interest, my lord," said Mrs. Wititterly, with a faint smile; "such an interest in the drama."

"Ye-es. It's very interesting," replied Lord Frederick.

"I'm always ill after Shakespeare," said Mrs. Wititterly, "I

[1] W. and D. Grant Brothers had their warehouse at the lower end of Cannon Street, and their private house in Mosely Street.

scarcely exist the next day; I find the reaction so very great after a tragedy, my lord, and Shakespeare is such a delicious creature."

"Ye-es!" replied Lord Frederick. "He was a clayver man."

But Sir Mulberry Hawk is a kind of scoundrel not frequently met with in polite society; his henchmen Pluck and Pyke have the air of "followers of Don John," and the enjoyments of the "trainers of young noblemen and gentlemen" at Hampton races, together with the riotous debauch which precedes the catastrophe, seem taken direct from the transpontine stage. The fact is that Dickens was here content to draw his vile seducers and wicked orgies, just as commonplace writers had drawn them a thousand times before, and will draw them a thousand times again. Much of the hero's talk is of the same conventional kind. On the other hand, nothing could be more genuine than the flow of fun in this book, which finds its outlet in the most unexpected channels, but nowhere so resistlessly as in the invertebrate talk of Mrs. Nickleby. For her Forster discovered a literary prototype in a character of Miss Austen's; but even if Mrs. Nickleby was founded on Miss Bates, in *Emma*, she left her original far behind. Miss Bates, indeed, is verbose, roundabout, and parenthetic; but the widow never deviates into coherence.

Nicholas Nickleby shows the comic genius of its author in full activity, and should be read with something of the buoyancy of spirit in which it was written, and not with a callousness capable of seeing in so amusing a scamp as Mr. Mantalini one of Dickens' "monstrous failures." At the same time this book displays the desire of the author to mould his manner on the old models. The very title has a savour of Smollett about it; the style has more than one reminiscence of him, as well as of Fielding

and of Goldsmith; and the general method of the narrative resembles that of our old novelists and their Spanish and French predecessors. Partly for this reason, and partly, no doubt, because of the rapidity with which the story was written, its construction is weaker than is usual even with Dickens' earlier works. Coincidences are repeatedly employed to help on the action; and the *dénoûment*, which, besides turning Mr. Squeers into a thief, reveals Ralph Nickleby as the father of Smike, is oppressively complete. As to the practical aim of the novel, the author's word must be taken for the fact that "Mr. Squeers and his school were faint and feeble pictures of an existing reality, purposely subdued and kept down lest they should be deemed impossible." The exposure, no doubt, did good in its way, though perhaps Mr. Squeers, in a more or less modified form, has proved a tougher adversary to overcome than Mrs. Gamp.

During these years Dickens was chiefly resident in the modest locality of Doughty Street, whither he had moved his household from the "three rooms," "three storeys high," in Furnival's Inn, early in 1837. It was not till the end of 1839 that he took up his abode, further west, in a house which he came to like best among all his London habitations, in Devonshire Terrace, Regent's Park. His town life was, however, varied by long rustications at Twickenham and at Petersham, and by sojourns at the seaside, of which he was a most consistent votary. He is found in various years of his life at Brighton, Dover, and Bonchurch—where he liked his neighbours better than he liked the climate; and in later years, when he had grown accustomed to the Continent, he repeatedly domesticated himself at Boulogne. But already in 1837 he had discovered the little seaside village, as it then

was, which for many years afterwards became his favourite holiday retreat, and of which he would be the *genius loci*, even if he had not by a special description immortalised *Our English Watering-place*. Broadstairs—whose afternoon tranquillity even to this day is undisturbed except by the Ethiopians on their tramp from Margate to Ramsgate—and its constant visitor, are thus described in a letter written to an American friend in 1843: "This is a little fishing-place; intensely quiet; built on a cliff, whereon—in the centre of a tiny semicircular bay—our house stands; the sea rolling and dashing under the windows. Seven miles out are the Goodwin Sands (you've heard of the Goodwin Sands?) whence floating lights perpetually wink after dark, as if they were carrying on intrigues with the servants. Also there is a big lighthouse called the North Foreland on a hill behind the village, a severe parsonic light, which reproves the young and giddy floaters, and stares grimly out upon the sea. Under the cliff are rare good sands, where all the children assemble every morning and throw up impossible fortifications, which the sea throws down again at high water. Old gentlemen and ancient ladies flirt after their own manner in two reading-rooms and on a great many scattered seats in the open air. Other old gentlemen look all day through telescopes and never see anything. In a bay-window in a one-pair sits, from nine o'clock to one, a gentleman with rather long hair and no neckcloth, who writes and grins, as if he thought he were very funny indeed. His name is Boz."

Not a few houses at Broadstairs may boast of having been at one time or another inhabited by him and his. Of the long-desired Fort House, however, which local perverseness triumphantly points out as the original of

Bleak House (no part even of *Bleak House* was written there, though part of *David Copperfield* was), he could not obtain possession till 1850. As like Bleak House as it is like Chesney Wold, it stands at the very highest end of the place, looking straight out to sea, over the little harbour and its two colliers, with a pleasant stretch of cornfields leading along the cliff towards the lighthouse which Dickens promised Lord Carlisle should serve him as a night-light. But in 1837 Dickens was content with narrower quarters. The "long small procession of sons" and daughters had as yet only begun with the birth of his eldest boy. His life was simple and full of work, and occasional seaside or country quarters, and now and then a brief holiday tour, afforded the necessary refreshment of change. In 1837 he made his first short trip abroad, and in the following year, accompanied by Mr. Hablot Browne, he spent a week of enjoyment in Warwickshire, noting in his *Remembrancer*: "Stratford; Shakespeare; the birthplace; visitors, scribblers, old woman (query whether she knows what Shakespeare did), etc." Meanwhile, among his truest home enjoyments were his friendships. They were few in number, mostly with men for whom, after he had once taken them into his heart, he preserved a lifelong regard. Chief of all these were John Forster and Daniel Maclise, the high-minded painter, to whom we owe a charming portrait of his friend in this youthful period of his life. Losing them, he afterwards wrote when absent from England, was "like losing my arms and legs, and dull and tame I am without you." Besides these, he was at this time on very friendly terms with William Harrison Ainsworth, who succeeded him in the editorship of the *Miscellany*, and concerning whom he exclaimed in his *Remembrancer*: "Ainsworth has a fine heart." At the

close of 1838, Dickens, Ainsworth, and Forster constituted themselves a club called the Trio, and afterwards the Cérberus. Another name frequent in the *Remembrancer* entries is that of Talfourd, a generous friend, in whom, as Dickens finely said after his death, "the success of other men made as little change as his own." All these, together with Stanfield, the Landseers, Douglas Jerrold, Macready, and others less known to fame, were among the friends and associates of Dickens' prime. The letters, too, remaining from this part of Dickens' life, have all the same tone of unaffected frankness. With some of his intimate friends he had his established epistolary jokes. Stanfield, the great marine painter, he pertinaciously treated as a "very salt" correspondent, communications to whom, as to a "block-reeving, main-brace-splicing, lead-heaving, ship-conning, stun'sail-bending, deck-swabbing son of a sea-cook," needed garnishing with the obscurest technicalities and strangest oaths of his element. (It is touching to turn from these friendly buffooneries to a letter written by Dickens many years afterwards—in 1867—and mentioning a visit to "poor dear Stanfield," when "it was clear that the shadow of the end had fallen on him. . . . It happened well that I had seen, on a wild day at Tynemouth, a remarkable sea effect, of which I wrote a description to him, and he had kept it under his pillow.") Macready, after his retirement from the stage, is bantered on the score of his juvenility with a pertinacity of fun recalling similar whimsicalities of Charles Lamb's; or the jest is changed, and the great London actor in his rural retreat is depicted in the character of a country gentleman strange to the wicked ways of the town. As in the case of many delightful letter-writers, the charm of Dickens as a correspondent vanishes so soon as he becomes self-

conscious. Even in his letters to Lady Blessington and Mrs. Watson, a striving after effect is at times perceptible; the homage rendered to Lord John Russell is not offered with a light hand; on the contrary, when writing to Douglas Jerrold, Dickens is occasionally so intent upon proving himself a sound Radical that his vehemence all but passes into a shriek.

In these early years, at all events, Dickens was happy in the society of his chosen friends. His favourite amusements were a country walk or ride with Forster, or a dinner at Jack Straw's Castle with him and Maclise. He was likewise happy at home. Here, however, in the very innermost circle of his affections, he had to suffer the first great personal grief of his life. His younger sister-in-law, Miss Mary Hogarth, had accompanied him and his wife into their new abode in Doughty Street, and here, in May, 1837, she died, at the early age of seventeen. No sorrow seems ever to have touched the heart and possessed the imagination of Charles Dickens like that for the loss of this dearly-loved girl, "young, beautiful, and good." "I can solemnly say," he wrote to her mother a few months after her death, "that, waking or sleeping, I have never lost the recollection of our hard trial and sorrow, and I feel that I never shall." "If," ran part of his first entry in the Diary which he began on the first day of the following year, "she were with us now, the same winning, happy, amiable companion, sympathising with all my thoughts and feelings more than anyone I knew ever did or will, I think I should have nothing to wish for but a continuance of such happiness. But she is gone, and pray God I may one day, through His mercy, rejoin her." It was not till, in after years, it became necessary to abandon the project, that he

ceased to cherish the intention of being buried by her side, and through life the memory of her haunted him with strange vividness. At the Niagara Falls, when the spectacle of Nature in her glory had produced in him, as he describes it, a wondrously tranquil and happy peace of mind, he longed for the presence of his dearest friends, and "I was going to add, what would I give if the dear girl, whose ashes lie in Kensal Green, had lived to come so far along with us; but she has been here many times, I doubt not, since her sweet face faded from my earthly sight." "After she died," he wrote to her mother in May, 1843, "I dreamed of her every night for many weeks, and always with a kind of quiet happiness, which became so pleasant to me that I never lay down at night without a hope of the vision coming back in one shape or other. And so it did." Once he dreamt of her, when travelling in Yorkshire; and then, after an interval of many months, as he lay asleep one night at Genoa, it seemed to him as if her spirit visited him and spoke to him in words which he afterwards precisely remembered, when he had awaked, with the tears running down his face. He never forgot her, and in the year before he died, he wrote to his friend: "She is so much in my thoughts at all times, especially when I am successful, and have greatly prospered in anything, that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is!" In a word, she was the object of the one great imaginative passion of his life. Many have denied that there is any likeness to nature in the fictitious figure in which, according to the wont of imaginative workers, he was irresistibly impelled to embody the sentiment with which she inspired him; but the sentiment itself became part of his nature, and part of his history.

When in writing the *Old Curiosity Shop* he approached the death of Little Nell, he shrank from the task. "Dear Mary died yesterday, when I think of this sad story."

The *Old Curiosity Shop* has long been freed from the encumbrances which originally surrounded it, and there is little except biographical interest in the half-forgotten history of *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Early in the year 1840, his success and confidence in his powers induced him to undertake an illustrated weekly journal, in which he depended solely on his own name, and, in the first instance, on his own efforts, as a writer. Such was his trust in his versatility, that he did not think it necessary even to open with a continuous story. Perhaps the popularity of the *Pickwick Papers* encouraged him to adopt the time-honoured device of wrapping up several tales in one. In any case, his framework was in the present instance too elaborate to take hold of the public mind, while the characters introduced into it possessed little or nothing of the freshness of their models in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. In order to reinforce Master Humphrey, the deaf gentleman, and the other original members of his benevolent conclave, he hereupon resorted to a natural, but none the less unhappy, expedient. Mr. Pickwick was revived, together with Sam Weller and his parent; and a Weller of the third generation was brought on the stage in the person of a precocious four-year-old, "standing with his little legs very wide apart as if the top-boots were familiar to them, and actually winking upon the housekeeper with his infant eye, in imitation of his grandfather." A laugh may have been raised at the time by this attempt, from which, however, every true Pickwickian must have turned sadly away. Nor was there much in the other contents of these early numbers to make up for the dis-

appointment. As therefore neither "Master Humphrey's Clock" nor "Mr. Weller's Watch" seemed to promise any lasting success, it was prudently determined that the story of the *Old Curiosity Shop*, of which the first portion had appeared in the fourth number of the periodical, should run on continuously; and when this had been finished, a very short "link" sufficed to introduce another story, *Barnaby Rudge*, with the close of which *Master Humphrey's Clock* likewise stopped.

In the *Old Curiosity Shop*, though it abounds in both grotesquely terrible and boisterously laughable effects, the keynote is that of an idyllic pathos. The sense of this takes hold of the reader at the very outset, as he lingers over the picture, with which the first chapter concludes, of little Nell asleep through the solitary night in the curiosity-dealer's warehouse. It retains possession of him as he accompanies the innocent heroine through her wanderings, pausing with her in the churchyard where all is quiet save the cawing of the satirical rooks, or in the schoolmaster's cottage by the open window, through which is borne upon the evening air the distant hum of the boys at play upon the green, while the poor schoolmaster holds in his hand the small cold one of the little scholar that has fallen asleep. Nor is it absent to the last when Nell herself lies at rest in her little bed. "Her little bird—a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed—was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless for ever." The hand which drew Little Nell afterwards formed other figures not less affecting, but none so essentially poetic. Like many such characters, this requires, for its full appreciation, a certain tension of the mind; and those who will not, or cannot, pass in some

measure out of themselves, will be likely to tire of the conception, or to declare its execution artificial. Curiously enough, not only was Little Nell a favourite of Landor, a poet and critic utterly averse from meretricious art, but she also deeply moved the sympathy of Lord Jeffrey, who at least knew his own mind, and spoke it in both praise and blame. As already stated, Dickens only with difficulty brought himself to carry his story to its actual issue, though it is hard to believe that he could ever have intended a different close from that which he gave to it. His whole heart was in the story, nor could he have consoled himself by means of an ordinary happy ending.

Dickens' comic humour never flowed in a pleasanter vein than in the *Old Curiosity Shop*, and nowhere has it a more exquisite element of pathos in it. The shock-headed, red-cheeked Kit is one of the earliest of those ungainly figures who speedily find their way into our affections—the odd family to which Mr. Toots, Tom Pinch, Tommy Traddles, and Joe Gargery alike belong. But the triumph of this serio-comic form of art in the *Old Curiosity Shop* is to be found in the later experiences of Dick Swiveller, who seems at first merely a more engaging sample of the Bob Sawyer species, but who ends by endearing himself to the most thoughtless laugher. Dick Swiveller and his protegee have gained a lasting place among the favourite characters of English fiction, and the privations of the Marchioness have possibly had a result which would have been that most coveted by Dickens—that of helping towards the better treatment of a class whose lot is among the dust and ashes, too often very bitter ashes, of many households. Besides these, the story contains a variety of incidental characters of a class which Dickens never grew weary of drawing from the life. Messrs. Codlin, Short, and

Company, and the rest of the itinerant showmen, seem to have come straight from the most real of country fairs; and if ever a *troupe* of comedians deserved pity on their wanderings through a callous world, it was the most diverting and the most dismal of all the mountebanks that gathered round the stew of tripe in the kitchen of The Jolly Sandboys—Jerry's performing dogs.

"Your people don't usually travel in character, do they?" said Short, pointing to the dresses of the dogs. "It must come expensive if they do."

"No," replied Jerry, "no, it's not the custom with us. But we've been playing a little on the road to-day, and we come out with a new wardrobe at the races, so I didn't think it worth while to stop to undress. Down, Pedro!"

In addition to these public servants we have a purveyor of diversion—or instruction—of an altogether different stamp. "Does the caravan look as if *it* know'd em?" indignantly demands the proprietress of Jarley's waxwork, when asked whether she is acquainted with the men of the Punch show. She too is drawn, or moulded, in the author's most exuberant style of fun, together with *her* company, in which "all the gentlemen were very pigeon-breasted and very blue about the beards, and all the ladies were miraculous figures; and all the ladies and all the gentlemen were looking intensely nowhere, and staring with extraordinary earnestness at nothing."

In contrast with these genial products of observation and humour stand the grotesquely hideous personages who play important parts in the machinery of the story, the vicious dwarf Quilp and the monstrous virago Sally Brass. The former is among the most successful attempts of Dickens in a direction which was full of danger for him, as it is for all writers; the malevolent

little demon is so blended with his surroundings—the description of which forms one of the author's most telling pictures of the lonely foulnesses of the riverside, —that his life seems natural in its way, and his death a most appropriate ending to it. Sally Brass, "whose accomplishments were all of a masculine and strictly legal kind," is less of a caricature, and not without a humorously redeeming point of feminine weakness; yet the end of her and her brother is described at the close of the book with almost tragic earnestness. On the whole, though the poetic sympathy of Dickens when he wrote this book was absorbed in the character of his heroine, yet his genius rarely asserted itself after a more diversified fashion.

Of *Barnaby Rudge*, though in my opinion an excellent book after its kind, I may speak more briefly. With the exception of *A Tale of Two Cities*, it was Dickens' only attempt in the historical novel. In the earlier work the relation between the foreground and background of the story is skilfully contrived, and the colouring of the whole, without any elaborate attempt at accurate fidelity, has a generally true and harmonious effect. With the help of her portrait by a painter (Mr. Frith) for whose pictures Dickens had a great liking, Dolly Varden has justly taken hold of the popular fancy as a charming type of a pretty girl of a century ago. And some of the local descriptions in the early part of the book are hardly less pleasing: the Temple in summer, as it was before the charm of Fountain Court was destroyed by its guardians; and the picturesque comforts of the Maypole Inn, described beforehand, by way of contrast to the desecration of its central sanctuary. The intrigue of the story is fairly interesting in itself, and

the gentlemanly villain who plays a principal part in it, though, as usual, over-elaborated, is drawn with more skill than Dickens usually displays in such characters. After the main interest of the book has passed to the historical action of the George Gordon riots, the story still retains its coherence, and, a few minor improbabilities apart, is successfully conducted to its close. No historical novel can altogether avoid the banalities of the species; and though Dickens, like all the world, had his laugh at the late Mr. G. P. R. James, he is constrained to introduce the historical hero of the tale, with his confidential adviser, and his attendant, in the familiar guise of three horsemen. As for Lord George Gordon himself, and the riots of which the responsibility remains inseparable from his unhappy memory, the representation of them in the novel sufficiently accords both with poetic probability and with historical fact. The poor lord's evil genius indeed, Gashford—who has no historical original—tries the reader's sense of verisimilitude rather hard; such converts are uncommon except among approvers. The Protestant hangman, on the other hand, has some slight historical warranty; but the leading part which he is made to play in the riots, and his resolution to go any lengths "in support of the great Protestant principle of hanging," overshoot the mark. It cannot be said that there is any substantial exaggeration in the description of the riots; thus, the burning of the great distiller's house in Holborn is a well-authenticated fact; and there is abundant vigour in the narrative. Repetition is unavoidable in treating such a theme, but in *Barnaby Rudge* it is not rendered less endurable by mannerism, nor puffed out with rhetoric.

One very famous character in this story was, as person-

ages in historical novels often are, made up out of two originals.[1] This was Grip the Raven, who, after seeing the idiot hero of the tale safe through his adventures, resumed his addresses on the subject of the kettle to the horses in the stable; and who, "as he was a mere infant when Barnaby was gray, has very probably gone on talking to the present time." In a later preface to *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens, with infinite humour, related his experiences of the two originals in question, and how he had been ravenless since the mournful death before the kitchen fire of the second of the pair, the *Grip* of actual life. This occurred in the house at Devonshire Terrace, into which the family had moved two years before (in 1839).

As Dickens' fame advanced, his circle of acquaintances was necessarily widened; and in 1841 he was invited to visit Edinburgh, and to receive there the first great tribute of public recognition which had been paid to him. He was entertained with great enthusiasm at a public banquet, voted the freedom of the city, and so overwhelmed with hospitalities that, notwithstanding his frank pleasure in these honours, he was glad to make his escape at last, and refreshed himself with a tour in the Highlands. These excitements may have intensified in him a desire which had for some time been active in his mind, and which in any case would have been kept alive by an incessant series of invitations. He had signed an

[1] As there is hardly a character in the whole world of fiction and the drama without some sort of a literary predecessor, so Dickens may have derived the first notion of Grip from the raven Ralpho—likewise the property of an idiot—who frightened Roderick Random and Strap out of their wits, and into the belief that he *was* the personage Grip so persistently declared himself to be.

agreement with his publishers for a new book before this desire took the shape of an actual resolution. There is no great difficulty in understanding why Dickens made up his mind to go to America, and thus to interrupt for the moment a course of life and work which was fast leading him on to great heights of fame and fortune. The question of international copyright alone would hardly have induced him to cross the seas. Probably he felt instinctively that to see men and cities was part of the training as well as of the recreation which his genius required. Dickens was by nature one of those artists who when at work always long to be in sympathy with their public, and to know it to be in sympathy with them. And hitherto he had not met more than part of his public of readers face to face.

CHAPTER III.

STRANGE LANDS.

1842—1847.

A JOURNEY across the Atlantic in midwinter is no child's-play even at the present day, when, bad though their passage may have been, few people would venture to confess doubts, as Dickens did, concerning the safety of such a voyage by steam in heavy weather. The travellers —for Dickens was accompanied by his wife—had an exceptionally rough crossing, the horrors of which he has described in his *American Notes*. His powers of observation were alive in the midst of the lethargy of sea-sickness, and when he could not watch others he found enough amusement in watching himself. At last, on January 28th, 1842, they found themselves in Boston harbour. Their stay in the United States lasted about four months, during which time they saw Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, and Buffalo. Then they passed by Niagara into Canada, and after a pleasant visit to Montreal, diversified by private theatricals with the officers there, were safe at home again in July.

Dickens had met with an enthusiastic welcome in every part of the States where he had not gone out of the way

of it; in New York, in particular, he had been fêted, with a fervour unique even in the history of American enthusiasms, under the resounding title of "the Guest of the Nation." Still, even this imposed no moral obligation upon him to take the advice tendered to him in America, and to avoid writing about that country—"we are so very suspicious." On the other hand, whatever might be his indignation at the obstinate unwillingness of the American public to be moved a hair's-breadth by his championship of the cause of international copyright,[1] this failure could not, in a mind so reasonable as his, have outweighed the remembrance of the kindness shown to him and to his fame. But the truth seems to be that he had, if not at first, at least very speedily, taken a dislike to American ways which proved too strong for him to the last. In strange lands, most of all in a country which, like the United States, is not in the least ashamed to be what it is, travellers are necessarily at the outset struck by details; and Dickens' habit of minute observation was certain not to let him lose many of them. He was neither long enough in the country to study very closely, nor was it in his way to ponder very deeply, the problems involved in the existence of many of the institutions with which he found fault. Thus, he was indignant at the sight of slavery, and even ventured to "tell a piece of his mind" on the subject to a Judge in the South; but when, twenty years later, the great struggle came, at the root of which this question lay, his sympathies were with the cause of disunion and slavery in its conflict with the "mad and

[1] After dining at a party including the son of an eminent man of letters, he notes in his *Remembrancer* that he found the great man's son "decidedly lumpish," and appends the reflexion: "Copyrights need be hereditary, for genius isn't."

villainous" North. In short, his knowledge of America and its affairs was gained in such a way and under such circumstances as to entitle him, if he chose, to speak to the vast public which he commanded as an author, of men and manners as observed by him; but he had no right to judge the destinies and denounce the character of a great people on evidence gathered in the course of a holiday tour.

Nor, indeed, did the *American Notes*, published by him after his return home, furnish any serious cause of offence. In an introductory chapter, which was judiciously suppressed, he had taken credit for the book as not having "a grain of any political ingredient in its whole composition." Indeed, the contents were rather disappointing from their meagreness. The author showed good taste in eschewing all reference to his personal reception, and good judgment in leaving the copyright question undiscussed. But though his descriptions were as vivid as usual—whether of the small steamboat, "of about half a pony power," on the Connecticut river, or of the dismal scenery on the Mississippi, "great father of rivers, who (praise be to Heaven) has no young children like him!"—and though some of the figure-sketches were touched off with the happiest of hands, yet the public, even in 1842, was desirous to learn something more about America than this. It is true that Dickens had, with his usual conscientiousness, examined and described various interesting public institutions in the States—prisons, asylums, and the like; but the book was not a very full one; it was hardly anything but a sketch-book, with more humour, but with infinitely less poetic spirit, than the *Sketch-book* of the illustrious American author, whose friendship had been one of the chief personal gains of Dickens' journey.

The *American Notes*, for which the letters to Forster had furnished ample materials, were published in the year of Dickens' return, after he had refreshed himself with a merry Cornish trip in the company of his old friend, and his two other intimates, "Stanny" and "Mac." But he had not come home, as he had not gone out, to be idle. On the first day of the following year, 1843, appeared the first number of the story which was to furnish the real *casus discriminis* between Dickens and the enemies, as well no doubt as a very large proportion of the friends, whom he had left behind him across the water. The American scenes in *Martin Chuzzlewit* did not, it is true, begin till the fifth number of the story; nor is it probable from the accounts of the sale, which was much smaller than Dickens had expected, that these particular episodes at first produced any strong feeling in the English public. But the merits of the book gradually obtained for it a popularity at home which has been surpassed by that of but one or two other of Dickens' works; and in proportion to this popularity was the effect exercised by its American chapters. What that effect has been, it would be hypocrisy to question.

Dickens, it is very clear, had been unable to resist the temptation of at once drawing upon the vast addition to his literary capital as a humourist. That the satire of many of the American scenes in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is, as satire, not less true than telling, it needs but a small acquaintance with American journalism and oratory even at the present day to perceive; and the heartrending history of Eden, as a type of some of the settlements "vaunted in England as a mine of Golden Hope," at least had the warrant of something more than hearsay and a look in passing. Nor, as has already been observed, would it have

been in accordance either with human nature, or with the fitness of things, had Dickens allowed his welcome in America to become to him (as he termed it in the suppressed Preface to the *Notes*) "an iron muzzle disguised beneath a flower or two." But the frankness, to say the least, of the mirror into which he now invited his late hosts to gaze, was not likely to produce grateful compliments to its presenter, nor was the effect softened by the despatch with which this *souvenir* of the "guest of the nation" was pressed upon its attention. No doubt it would have been easy to reflect that only the evil, not the good, sides of social life in America were held up to derision and contempt, and that an honourable American journalist had no more reason to resent the portraiture of Mr. Jefferson Brick than a virtuous English *paterfamilias* had to quarrel with that of Mr. Pecksniff. Unfortunately, offence is usually taken where offence is meant; and there can be little doubt as to the *animus* with which Dickens had written. Only two months after landing at Boston Dickens had declared to Macready, that "however much he liked the ingredients of this great dish, he could not but say that the dish itself went against the grain with him, and that he didn't like it." It was not, and could not be, pleasant for Americans to find the "*New York Sewer*, in its twelfth thousand, with a whole column of New Yorkers to be shown up, and all their names printed," introduced as the first expression of "the bubbling passions of their country;" or to be certified, apropos of a conversation among American "gentlemen" after dinner, that dollars, and dollars only, at the risk of honesty and honour, filled their souls. "No satirist," Martin Chuzzlewit is told by a candid and open-minded American, "could, I believe, breathe this air."

But satire in such passages as these, borders too closely on angry invective; and neither the irresistible force, nor the earnest pathos, of the details which follow, can clear away the suspicion that at the bottom lay a desire to depreciate. Nor was the general effect of the American episodes in *Martin Chuzzlewit* materially modified by their conclusion, to which, with the best of intentions, the author could not bring himself to give a genuinely complimentary turn. The Americans did not like all this, and could not be expected to like it. The tone of the whole satire was too savage, and its tenor was too hopelessly onesided, for it to pass unresented; while much in it was too near the truth to glance off harmless. It is well known that in time Dickens came himself to understand this. Before quitting America in 1868, he declared his intention to publish in every future edition of his *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, his testimony to the magnanimous cordiality of his second reception in the States, and to the amazing changes for the better which he had seen everywhere around him during his second sojourn in the country. But it is not likely that the postscript, all the more since it was added under circumstances so honourable to both sides, has undone, or will undo, the effect of the text. Very possibly the Americans may, in the eyes of the English people as well as in their own, cease to be chargeable with the faults and foibles satirised by Dickens; but the satire itself will live, and will continue to excite laughter and loathing, together with the other satire of the powerful book to which it belongs.

For in none of his books is that power, which at times filled their author himself with astonishment, more strikingly and abundantly revealed than in *The Life and*

Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit. Never was his inventive force more flexible and more at his command; yet none of his books cost him more hard work. The very names of hero and novel were only the final fortunate choice out of a legion of notions; though "Pecksniff" as well as "Charity" and "Mercy" ("not unholy names, I hope," said Mr. Pecksniff to Mrs. Todgers) were first inspirations. The MS. text too is full of the outward signs of care. But the author had his reward in the general impression of finish which is conveyed by this book as compared with its predecessors; so that *Martin Chuzzlewit* may be described as already one of the masterpieces of Dickens' maturity as a writer. Oddly enough, the one part of the book which moves rather heavily is the opening chapter, an effort in the mock-heroic, probably suggested by the author's eighteenth century readings.

A more original work, however, than *Martin Chuzzlewit* was never composed, or one which more freshly displays the most characteristic qualities of its author's genius. Though the actual construction of the story is anything but faultless—for what could be more slender than the thread by which the American interlude is attached to the main action, or more wildly improbable than the hazardous stratagem of old Martin upon which that action turns?—yet it is so contrived as to fulfil the author's avowed intention of exhibiting under various forms the evil and the folly of selfishness. This vice is capable of both serious and comic treatment, and commended itself in each aspect to Dickens as being essentially antagonistic to his moral and artistic ideals of human life. A true comedy of humours thus unfolded itself with the progress of his book, and one for which the types had not been fetched from afar: "Your homes

the scene; yourselves the actors here" had been the motto which he had at first intended to put upon his title-page. Thus, while in "the old-established firm of Anthony Chuzzlewit and Son" selfishness is cultivated as a growth excellent in itself, and the son's sentiment, "Do other men, for they would do you," is applauded by his admiring father, in young Martin the vice rather resembles a weed strong and rank, yet not so strong but that it gives way at last before a manly endeavour to uproot it. The character of the hero, though very far from heroic, is worked out with that reliance upon the fellow-feeling of candid readers which in our great novelists of the eighteenth century has obtained sympathy for much less engaging personages. More especially is the young man's loss of self-respect in the season of his solitary wretchedness depicted with admirable feeling. It would not, I think, be fanciful to assert that in this story Dickens has with equal skill distinguished between two species of unselfishness. Mark Tapley's is the actively unselfish nature, and though his reiteration of his guiding motive is wearisome and occasionally absurd, yet the power of coming out jolly under unpropitious circumstances is a genuinely English ideal of manly virtue. Tom Pinch's character, on the other hand, is unselfish from innate sweetness; and never has the art of Dickens drawn a type which, while closely approaching the borderline of the grotesque, is yet so charmingly true to nature.

Grotesque characters proper are numerous enough in this book, but all the others pale before the immortal presence of Mrs. Gamp. She has been traced to an original in real life, but her literary right to stand on her own legs has been most properly vindicated against any supposition of likeness to the different type, the subject of Leigh Hunt's

Monthly Nurse,—a paper, by the way, distinguished by shrewdness as well as feeling. Imagination has never taken bolder flights than those requisite for the development of Mrs. Gamp's mental processes:

"And which of all them smoking monsters is the Ankworks boat, I wonder. Goodness me!" cried Mrs. Gamp.

"What boat did you want?" asked Ruth.

"The Ankworks package," Mrs. Gamp replied. "I will not deceive you, my sweet. Why should I?"

"That is the Antwerp packet in the middle," said Ruth.

"And I wish it was in Jonadge's belly, I do," cried Mrs. Gamp, appearing to confound the prophet with the whale in this miraculous aspiration.

A hardly inferior exertion of creative power was needed in order to fix in distinct forms the peculiarities of her diction, nay, to sustain the unique rhythm of her speech:

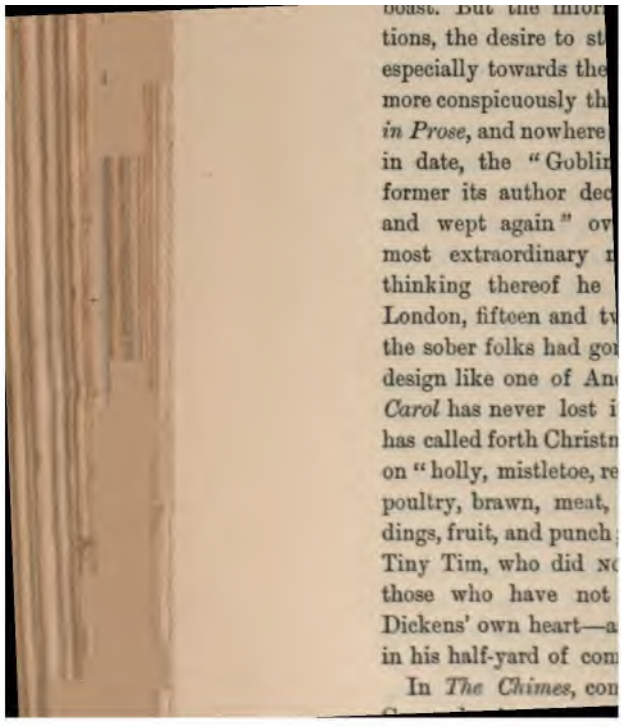
"I says to Mrs. Harris," Mrs. Gamp continued, "only t' other day, the last Monday fortnight as ever dawned upon this Piljian's Projiss of a mortal wale; I says to Mrs. Harris, when she says to me, 'Years and our trials, Mrs. Gamp, sets marks upon us all.' 'Say not the words, Mrs. Harris, if you and me is to be continual friends, for sech is not the case.'"

Yet the reality of Mrs. Gamp has been acknowledged to be such that she has been the death of her sisterhood in a great part (to say the least) of our hospital wards and sick rooms; and as for her oddities of tongue, they are, with the exception of her boldest figures, but the glorified type of all the utterances heard to this day from charwomen, laundresses, and single gentlemen's housekeepers. Compared with her, even her friend and patron, Mr. Mould, and her admirer, Mr. Bailey, and in other parts of the book the low company at Todgers' and the fine company at Mr. Tigg Montague's sink into insignificance. The aged Chuffey is a grotesque study of a very different

kind, of which the pathos never loses itself in exaggeration. As for Pecksniff, he is as far out of the range of grotesque, as, except when moralising over the banisters at Todgers', he is out of that of genial, characters. He is the richest comic type, while at the same time one of the truest, among the innumerable reproductions in English imaginative literature of our favourite national vice—hypocrisy. His friendliness is the very quintessence of falsehood: "Mr. Pinch," he cries to poor Tom over the currant wine and captain's biscuits, "if you spare the bottle, we shall quarrel!" His understanding with his daughters is the very perfection of guile, for they confide in him, even when ignorant of his intentions, because of their certainty "that in all he does, he has his purpose straight and full before him." And he is a man who understands the times as well as the land in which he lives; for, as M. Taine has admirably pointed out, where Tartuffe would have been full of religious phrases, Pecksniff presents himself as a humanitarian philosopher. Comic art has never more successfully fulfilled its highest task after its truest fashion than in this picture of the rise and fall of a creature, who never ceases to be laughable, and yet never ceases to be loathsome. Nothing is wanting in this wonderful book to attest the exuberance of its author's genius. The kindly poetic spirit of the Christmas books breathes in sweet Ruth Pinch; and the tragic power of the closing chapters of *Oliver Twist* is recalled by the picture of Jonas before and after his deed of blood. I say nothing of merely descriptive passages, though in none of his previous stories had Dickens so completely mastered the secret of describing scenery and weather in their relation to his action or his characters.

Martin Chuzzlewit ran its course of twenty monthly

numbers; but already a week or two before the appearance of the first of these, Dickens had bestowed upon the public, young and old, the earliest of his delightful *Christmas Books*. Among all his productions perhaps none connected him so closely, and as it were personally, with his readers. Nor could it well have been otherwise; since nowhere was he so directly intent upon promoting kindliness of feeling among men,—more especially goodwill, founded upon respect, towards the poor. Cheerfulness was. from his point of view, twin-sister to charity; and sulkiness, like selfishness, belonged, as an appropriate ort, to the dustheap of "Tom Tiddler's Ground." What more fit than that he should mingle such sentiments as these with the holly and the mistletoe of the only English holiday in which remains a vestige of religious and poetic feeling? Beyond all doubt there is much that is tedious in the *cultus* of Father Christmas, and there was yet more in the days when the lower classes in England had not yet come to look upon a sufficiency of periodical holidays as part of their democratic inheritance. But that Dickens should constitute himself its chief minister and interpreter was nothing but fit. Already one of the *Sketches* had commended a Christmas dinner at which a seat is not denied even to "poor Aunt Margaret;" and Mr. Pickwick had never been more himself than in the Christmas game of Blind-man's-buff at Dingley Dell, in which "the poor relations caught the people who they thought would like it," and, when the game flagged, "got caught themselves." But he now sought to reach the heart of the subject; and the freshness of his fancy enabled him delightfully to vary his illustrations of a text of which it can do no man harm to be reminded in as well as out of season.



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unmistakeable; but the effect of hard exaggerations such as Mr. Filer and Alderman Cute, and of a burlesque absurdity like Sir Joseph Bowley, was too dreary to be counteracted by the more pleasing passages of the tale. In his novel *Hard Times*, Dickens afterwards reproduced some of the ideas, and repeated some of the artistic mistakes, to be found in *The Chimes*, though the design of the later work was necessarily of a more mixed kind. The Christmas book has the tone of a *doctrinaire* protest against *doctrinaires*, and, as Forster has pointed out, is manifestly written under the influence of Carlyle. But its main doctrine was one which Dickens lost no opportunity of proclaiming, and which here breaks forth in the form of an indignant appeal by Richard Fern, the outlaw in spite of himself: "Gentlefolks, be not hard upon the poor!" No feeling was more deeply rooted in Dickens' heart than this; nor could he forbear expressing it by invective and satire as well as by humorous and pathetic pictures of his clients, among whom Trotty Veck too takes a representative place.

The Cricket on the Hearth, as a true work of art, is not troubled about its moral, easily though half-a-dozen plain morals might be drawn from it; a purer and more lightsome creation of the fancy has never been woven out of homespun materials. Of the same imaginative type, though not executed with a fineness so surpassing, is *The Battle of Life*, the treatment of a fancy in which Dickens appears to have taken great pleasure. Indeed, he declared that he was "thoroughly wretched at having to use the idea for so short a story." As it stands, it is a pretty idyll of resignation, very poetical in tone as well as in conception, though here and there, notwithstanding the complaint just quoted, rather lengthy. It has been con-

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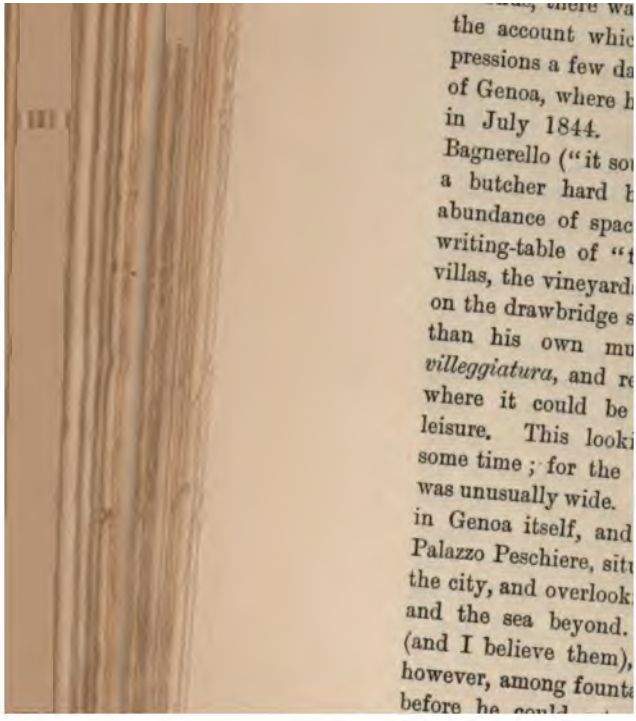
had been formed before he became a traveller and sojourner in foreign lands. In Italy, as elsewhere, a man will, in a sense, find only what he takes there. At all events the changed life brought with it for Dickens, though not at once, a refreshment and a brief repose which invigorated him for some of the truest efforts of his genius. His resolution to spend some time on the Continent had not been taken rashly, although it was at least hastened by business disappointments. He seems at this time as was virtually inevitable, to have seen a good deal of society in London, and more especially to have become a welcome guest of Lady Blessington and Count d'Orsay at Gore House. Moreover, his services were beginning to be occasionally claimed as a public speaker; and altogether he must have found more of his time than he wished slipping through his hands. Lastly, he very naturally desired to see what was to be seen, and to enjoy what was to be enjoyed, by one gifted with a sleepless observation and animated by a genuine love of nature and art. The letters, public and private, which he wrote from Italy, are not among the most interesting productions of his pen; even his humour seems now and then ill at ease in them, and his descriptive power narrow in its range. His eyes were occasionally veiled, as are those of most travellers in quest of "first impressions." Thus I cannot but think his picture of Naples inadequate, and that of its population unjust. Again, although he may have told the truth in asserting that the Eternal City, at first sight, "looked like—I am half afraid to write the word—like LONDON," and although his general description of Rome has been pronounced correct by competent judgment, yet it is impossible to ignore in it the undertone of Bow



excitement for his nightly walks in the London streets, he settled down to his task. I have already described the spirit in which he executed it. No sooner was the writing done, than the other half of his double artist-nature was seized with another craving. The rage which possesses authors to read their writings aloud to sympathising ears, if such can be found, is a well-worn theme of satire; but in Dickens, the actor was almost as strong as the author, and he could not withstand the desire to interpret in person what he had written, and to watch its effect with his own eyes and ears. In the first days of November, therefore, he set off from Genoa, and made his way home by Bologna, Venice, Milan, and the Simplon Pass. Of this journey, his *Pictures from Italy* contains the record, including a chapter about Venice, pitched in an unusually poetic key. But not all the memories of all the Doges could have stayed the execution of his set purpose. On the 30th of November he reached London, and on the 2nd of December he was reading the *Chimes*, from the proofs, to the group of friends immortalised in Maclise's inimitable sketch. Three days afterwards the reading was repeated to a slightly different audience; and, indeed, it would seem, from an enthusiastic postscript to a letter addressed to his wife, that he had read at least part of the book to Macready on the night before that of the first conclave. The distance was no doubt wide between the intimacy of these friendly readings and the stormy seas of public audiences; but, however unconsciously, the first step had been taken. It may be worth noticing, in connexion with this, that the scheme of a private dramatic performance, which was to occupy much of Dickens' "leisure" in the year following, was proposed for the first time on the occasion of the first reading of the *Chimes*. Before

Christmas he was back again in his "Italian bowers." If the strain of his effort in writing the *Chimes* had been severe, the holiday which followed was long. In the later winter and early spring of 1845 he and the ladies of his family saw Rome and Naples, and in June their Italian life came to an end, and they were in London before the close of the month. Projects of work remained in abeyance until the absorbing fancy of a private play had been realised with an earnestness such as only Dickens could carry into his amusements, and into this particular amusement above all others. The play was *Every Man in his Humour*; the theatre, the little house in Dean Street, of whose chequered fortunes no theatrical history has succeeded in exhausting the memories; and the manager was of course "Bobadil," as Dickens now took to signing himself. His joking remark to Macready, that he "thought of changing his present mode of life, and was open to an engagement," was after all not so very wide of the mark. According to the inevitable rule in such things, he and his friends—among whom Mark Lemon, Douglas Jerrold, and Forster were conspicuous—were "induced" to repeat their performance at a larger house for a public charity, and later in the year they played *The Elder Brother* for Miss Fanny Kelly's benefit. Leigh Hunt, whose opinion however could hardly fail to be influenced by the circumstances under which Ben Jonson's comedy was afterwards performed by the amateurs, and who was no longer the youthful Draco of the *News*, afterwards spoke very highly of Dickens' Bobadil. It had "a spirit in it of intellectual apprehension beyond anything the existing stage has shown." His acting in the farce which followed, Leigh Hunt thought "throughout admirable; quite rich and filled up."

Christmas, 1845, had passed, and *The Cricket on the Hearth* had graced the festival, when an altogether new chapter in Dickens' life seemed about to open for him. The experience through which he now passed was one on which his biographer, for reasons easy to guess, has touched very slightly, while his *Letters* throw no additional light on it at all. Most people, I imagine, would decline to pronounce upon the qualifications requisite in an editor of a great political journal. Yet, literary power of a kind which acts upon the multitude rapidly and powerfully, habits of order so confirmed as to have almost become second nature, and an interest in the affairs of the nation fed by an ardent enthusiasm for its welfare—these would seem to go some way towards making up the list. Of all these qualifications Dickens at various times gave proof, and they sufficed in later years to make him the successful conductor of a weekly journal which aimed at the enlightenment hardly less than at the entertainment of no inconsiderable portion of the British public. But, in the first place, political journalism proper is a craft of which very few men have been known to become masters by intuition, and Dickens had as yet had no real experience of it. His zealous efforts as a reporter can hardly be taken into account here. He had for a short time edited a miscellany of amusement, and had failed to carry beyond a beginning the not very carefully considered scheme of another. Recently, he had resumed the old notion of *Master Humphrey's Clock* in a different shape; but nothing had come of his projected cheap weekly paper for the present, while its title, "*The Cricket*," was reserved for a different use. Since his reporting days he had, however, now and then appeared among the lighter combatants of political litera-

ture. In 1841 he had thrown a few squibs in the *Examiner* at Sir Robert Peel and the Tories; and from about the same date he had, besides occasionally contributing to the literary and theatrical columns of the same weekly journal, now and then discussed in it subjects of educational or other general interest.[1] Finally, it is stated by Forster, that in 1844, when the greatest political struggle of the last generation was approaching its climax, Dickens contributed some articles to the *Morning Chronicle* which attracted attention and led to negotiations with the editor that arrived at no positive result. If these contributions treated any political questions whatever, they were, with the exception of the few *Examiner* papers, and of the letters to the *Daily News* to be mentioned in this chapter, the only articles of this kind which, to my knowledge, he ever wrote.

For, from first to last, whether in the days when Oliver Twist suffered under the maladministration of the Poor-Law, or in those when Arthur Clennam failed to make an impression upon the Circumlocution Office, politics were with Dickens a sentiment rather than a study or a pursuit. With his habits of application and method, it might have taken but a very short time for him to train himself as a politician; but this short time never actually occurred. There is, however, no reason to suppose that when, in 1841, a feeler was put out by some more or less influential persons at Reading, with regard to his willingness to be nominated for the representation of that borough, he had any reason for declining the proposal besides that which he stated in his replies. He could not afford the requisite

[1] From a list of MSS. at South Kensington, kindly furnished me by Mr. R. F. Sketchley, I find that Mr. R. H. Shepherd's *Bibliography of Dickens* is incomplete on this head.

expense; and he was determined not to forfeit his independence through accepting Government—by which I hope he means Whig party—aid for meeting the cost of the contest. Still, in 1845, though slack of faith in the "people who govern us," he had not yet become the irreclaimable political sceptic of later days; and without being in any way bound to the Whigs, he had that general confidence in Lord John Russell which was all they could expect from their irregular followers. As yet, however, he had shown no sign of any special aptitude or inclination for political work, though if he addressed himself to questions affecting the health and happiness of the humbler classes, he was certain to bring to them the enthusiasm of a genuine sympathy. And a question of this kind was uppermost in Englishmen's minds in this year 1845, when at last the time was drawing near for the complete abolition of the tax upon the staple article of the poor man's daily food.

The establishment of a new London morning paper, on the scale to which those already in existence had attained, was a serious matter in itself; but it seems to have been undertaken in no spirit of diffidence by the projectors and first proprietors of the *Daily News*. With the early history of the experiment I cannot here concern myself; it is, however, an open secret that the rate of expenditure of the new journal was at first on a most liberal, not to say lavish, scale, and that the losses of the proprietors were for many years very large indeed. Established on those principles of radicalism which, on the whole, it has in both good and evil times consistently maintained, the *Daily News* was to rise superior to the opportunism, if not to the advertisements, of the *Times*, and to outstrip the cautious steps of the Whig *Morning Chronicle*.

Special attention was to be given to those industrial enterprises with which the world teemed in that speculative age, and no doubt also to those social questions affecting the welfare and elevation of the masses and the relations between employers and employed, which were attracting more and more of the public attention. But in the first instance the actual political situation would oblige the new journal to direct the greater part of its energies to one particular question, which had, in truth, already been threshed out by the organs of public opinion, and as to which the time for action had at last arrived. No liberal journal projected in 1845, and started early in 1846, could fail to concentrate its activity for a time upon the question of the corn-laws, to which the session of 1846 was to give the death-blow.

It is curious enough, on opening the first number of the *Daily News*, dated January 21st, 1846, to find oneself transplanted into the midst of one of the most memorable episodes of our more recent political history. The very advertisements of subscriptions to the Anti-Corn-Law League, with the good old Manchester names figuring conspicuously among them, have a historic interest; and the report of a disputation on free trade at Norwich, in which all the hits are made by Mr. Cobden, another report of a great London meeting on the same subject, and some verses concerning the people's want of its bread, probably written by Mr. Charles Mackay, occupy an entire page of the paper. Railway news and accounts of railway meetings fill about the same space; while the foreign news is extremely meagre. There remain the leading articles, four in number—of which three are on the burning question of the day—and the first of a series of *Travelling Letters written on the Road, by Charles Dickens*

(the Avignon chapter in the *Pictures from Italy*).[1] The hand of the editor is traceable only in this *feuilleton* and in the opening article of the new paper. On internal evidence I conclude that this article, which has little to distinguish it from similar manifestoes, unless it be a moderation of tone that would not have suited Captain Shandon, was not written by Dickens alone or unassisted. But his hand is traceable in the concluding paragraphs, which contain the following wordy but spirited assertion of a cause that Dickens lost no opportunity of advocating:

> We seek, so far as in us lies, to elevate the character of the Public Press in England. We believe it would attain a much higher position, and that those who wield its powers would be infinitely more respected as a class, and an important one, if it were purged of a disposition to sordid attacks *upon itself*, which only prevails in England and America. We discern nothing in the editorial plural that justifies a gentleman, or body of gentlemen, in discarding a gentleman's forbearance and responsibility, and venting ungenerous spleen against a rival, by a perversion of a great power—a power, however, which is only great so long as it is good and honest. The stamp on newspapers is not like the stamp on universal medicine-bottles, which licenses anything, however false and monstrous; and we are sure this misuse of it, in any notorious case, not only offends and repels right-minded men in that particular instance, but naturally, though unjustly, involves the whole Press, as a pursuit or profession, in the feeling so awakened, and places the character of all who are associated with it at a great disadvantage.

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[1] By an odd coincidence, not less than four out of the six theatres advertising their performances in this first number of the *Daily News* announce each a different adaptation of *The Cricket on the Hearth*. Among the curiosities of the casts are observable: at the Adelphi, Wright as Tilly Slowboy, and at the Haymarket Buckstone in the same character, with William Farren as Caleb Plummer. The latter part is taken at the Princess's by Compton, Mrs. Stirling playing Dot. At the Lyceum, Mr., Mrs., and Miss Mary Keeley, and Mr. Emery appear in the piece.

Entering on this adventure of a new daily journal in a spirit of honourable competition and hope of public usefulness, we seek, in our new station, at once to preserve our own self-respect, and to be respected, for ourselves and for it, by our readers. Therefore, we beg them to receive, in this our first number, the assurance that no recognition or interchange of trade abuse, by us, shall be the destruction of either sentiment; and that we intend proceeding on our way, and theirs, without stooping to any such flowers by the roadside.

I am unable to say how many days it was after the appearance of this first number that Dickens, or the proprietors of the journal, or, as seems most likely, both sides simultaneously, began to consider the expediency of ending the connexion between them. He was "revolving plans for quitting the paper" on January 30th, and resigned his editorship on February 9th following. In the interval, with the exception of two or three more of the *Travelling Letters*, very few signs of his hand appear in the journal. The number of January 24th, however, contains an editorial contribution, in the shape of "a new song, but an old story," concerning *The British Lion*, his accomplishment of eating Corn-Law Leagues, his principal keeper, *Wan Humbug*, and so forth. This it would be cruel to unearth. A more important indication of a line of writing that his example may have helped to domesticate in the *Daily News* appears in the number of February 4th, which contains a long letter, with his signature, urging the claims of Ragged Schools, and giving a graphic account of his visit to one in Saffron Hill. After he had placed his resignation in the hands of the proprietors, and was merely holding on at his post till the time of his actual withdrawal, he was naturally not anxious to increase the number of his contributions. The *Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourers*—which appeared on

February 14th—is, of course, an echo of the popular cry of the day; but the subtler pathos of Dickens never found its way into his verse. The most important, and so far as I know the last, of his contributions to the *Daily News*, consisted of a series of three letters (March 9th, 13th, and 16th) on capital punishment. It was a question which much occupied him at various times of his life, and on which it cannot be shown that he really changed his opinions. The letters in the *Daily News*, based in part on the arguments of one of the ablest men of his day, the "unlucky" Mr. Wakefield, are an interesting contribution to the subject; and the first of them, with its Hogarthian sketch of the temptation and fall of Thomas Hocker, Sunday-school teacher and murderer, would be worth reprinting as an example of Dickens' masterly use of the argument *ex concreto*.

The few traditions which linger in the *Daily News* office concerning Dickens as editor of the paper, agree with the conjecture that his labours on its behalf were limited, or very nearly so, to the few pieces enumerated above. Of course there must have been some inevitable business; but of this much may have been taken off his hands by his sub-editor, Mr. W. H. Wills, who afterwards became his *alter ego* at the office of his own weekly journal and his intimate personal friend. In the days of the first infancy of the *Daily News*, Mr. Britton, the present publisher of that journal, was attached to the editor as his personal office attendant; and he remembers very vividly what little there can have been to remember about Dickens' performance of his functions. His habit, following a famous precedent, was to make up for coming late—usually about half-past ten P.M.—by going away early—usually not long after

midnight. There were frequently sounds of merriment, if not of modest revelry, audible from the little room at the office in Lombard Street, where the editor sat in conclave with Douglas Jerrold and one or two other intimates. Mr. Britton is not sure that the work did not sometimes begin *after the editor had left*; but at all events he cannot recollect that Dickens ever wrote anything at the office—that he ever for instance wrote about a debate that had taken place in Parliament on the same night. And he sums up his reminiscences by declaring his conviction that Dickens was "not a newspaper man, at least not when in 'the chair.'" And so Dickens seems on this occasion to have concluded; for when, not long after quitting the paper, he republished with additions the *Travelling Letters* which during his conduct of it had been its principal ornaments, he spoke of "a brief mistake he had made, not long ago, in disturbing the old relations between himself and his readers, and departing for a moment from his old pursuits." He had been virtually out of "the chair" almost as soon as he had taken it; his successor, but only for a few months, was his friend Forster.

Never has captive released made a more eager or a better use of his recovered freedom. Before the summer had fairly set in, Dickens had let his house, and was travelling with his family up the Rhine towards Switzerland. This was, I think, Dickens' only passage through Germany, which in language and literature remained a *terra incognita* to him, while in various ways so well known to his friendly rivals, Lord Lytton and Thackeray. He was on the track of poor Thomas Hood's old journeyings, whose facetious recollections of Rhineland he had some years before reviewed in a spirit of admira-

tion rather for the author than for the book, funny as it is. His point of destination was Lausanne, where he had resolved to establish his household for the summer, and where by the middle of June they were most agreeably settled in a little villa or cottage which did not belie its name of Rosemont, and from which they looked upon the lake and the mighty Alpine chain beyond. If Rome had reminded Dickens of London, the green woods near Lausanne recalled to him his Kentish glades; but he had the fullest sense and the truest enjoyment of the grandeurs of Alpine scenery, and lost no opportunity of becoming acquainted with them. Thus his letters contain an admirable description (not untinged with satire) of a trip to the Great St. Bernard and its convent, many years afterwards reproduced in one of the few enjoyable chapters of the Second Part of *Little Dorrit*. More interesting, however, because more characteristic, is the freshness and candour with which in Switzerland, where by most English visitors the native inhabitants are "taken for granted," he set himself to observe, and, so far as he could, to appreciate, the people among whom he was a temporary resident. His solutions of some of the political difficulties, which were mostly connected with religious differences, at that time rife in Switzerland, are palpably one-sided. But the generosity of spirit which reveals itself in his kindly recognition of the fine qualities of the people around him, is akin to what was best and noblest in Dickens.

He had, at the same time, been peculiarly fortunate in finding at Lausanne a circle of pleasant acquaintances, to whom he dedicated the Christmas book which he wrote among the roses and the foliage of his lake-side cottage. Of course *The Battle of Life* was read aloud by its author to so kindly an audience. The day of parting,

however, soon came; on the 16th of November *pater-familias* had his "several tons of luggage, other tons of servants, and other tons of children," in travelling order, and soon had safely stowed them away at Paris "in the most preposterous house in the world. The like of it can not, and so far as my knowledge goes, does not, exist in any other part of the globe. The bedrooms are like opera-boxes; the dining-rooms, staircases, and passages quite inexplicable. The dining-room"—which in another letter he describes as "mere midsummer madness"—"is a sort of cavern painted (ceiling and all) to represent a grove, with unaccountable bits of looking-glass sticking in among the branches of the trees. There is a gleam of reason in the drawing-room, but it is approached through a series of small chambers, like the joints in a telescope, which are hung with inscrutable drapery." Here, with the exception of two brief visits to England, paid before his final departure, he spent three months, familiarising himself for the first time of his life with the second of his "Two Cities."

Dickens came to know the French language well enough to use it with ease, if not with elegance; and he lost no opportunity, it need hardly be said, of resorting to the best of schools for the purpose. Macready, previously addressed from "Altorf," had made him acquainted with Regnier of the Théâtre Français, who in his turn had introduced him to the greenroom of the house of Molière. Other theatres were diligently visited by him and Forster when the latter arrived on a visit; and celebrities were polite and hospitable to their distinguished English *confrère*. With these, however, Dickens was not cosmopolitan enough to consort except in passing; the love of literary society *because* it is literary society was at no time one of his predilections or foibles. The streets of Paris were to

him more than its *salons*, more even than its theatres. They are so to a larger number of Englishmen than that which cares to confess it, but Dickens would have been the last to disown the impeachment. They were the proper sphere for his powers of humorous observation, as he afterwards showed in more than one descriptive paper as true to life as any of his London *Sketches*. And, moreover, he *needed* the streets for the work which he had in hand. *Dombey and Son* had been begun at Rosemont, and the first of its twenty monthly numbers had been published in October, 1846. No reader of the book is likely to forget how, after writing the chapter which relates the death of little Paul, Dickens during the greater part of the night wandered restlessly with a heavy heart about the Paris streets. Sooner, however, than he had intended, his residence abroad had to come to a close; and early in 1847 he and his family were again in London.

Dombey and Son has, perhaps, been more criticised than any other among the stories of its author; and yet it certainly is not the one which has been least admired, or least loved. Dickens himself, in the brief preface which he afterwards prefixed to the story, assumed a half-defiant air which sits ill upon the most successful author, but which occasionally he was tempted to assume. Before condescending to defend the character of Mr. Dombey as in accordance with both probability and experience, he "made so bold as to believe that the faculty (or the habit) of correctly observing the characters of men is a rare one." Yet, though the drawing of this character is only one of the points which have been objected against the story, not only did the book at the time of publication far surpass its predecessor in popularity, but it has, I believe, always preserved to itself a special congregation

of enthusiastic admirers. Manifestly, this novel is one of its author's most ambitious endeavours. In it, more distinctly even than in *Chuzzlewit*, he has chosen for his theme one of the chief vices of human nature, and has striven to show what pride cannot achieve, what it cannot conquer, what it cannot withstand. This central idea gives to the story, throughout a most varied succession of scenes, a unity of action to be found in few of Dickens' earlier works. On the other hand, *Dombey and Son* shares with these earlier productions, and with its successor, *David Copperfield*, the freshness of invention and spontaneous flow of both humour and pathos which at times are wanting in the more powerfully conceived and more carefully constructed romances of Dickens' later years. If there be any force at all in the common remark, that the most interesting part of the book ends together with the life of little Paul, the censure falls upon the whole design of the author. Little Paul, in something besides the ordinary meaning of the words, was born to die; and though, like the writer, most readers may have dreaded the hour which was to put an end to that frail life, yet in this case there could be no question—such as was possible in the story of Little Nell—of any other issue. Indeed, deep as is the pathos of the closing scene, its beauty is even surpassed by those which precede it. In death itself there is release for a child as for a man, and for those sitting by the pillow of the patient; but it is the gradual approach of death which seems hardest of all for the watchers to bear; it is the sinking of hope which seems even sadder than its extinction. What old fashion could that be, Paul wondered with a palpitating heart, that was so visibly expressed in him, so plainly seen by so many people!

Every heart is softened and every eye dimmed, as the innocent child passes on his way to his grave. The hand of God's angel is on him; he is no longer altogether of this world. The imagination which could picture and present this mysterious haze of feeling, through which the narrative moves, half like a reality, half like a dream, is that of a true poet, and of a great one.

What even the loss of his son could not effect in Mr. Dombey is to be accomplished in the progress of the story by a yet stronger agency than sorrow. His pride is to be humbled to the dust, where he is to be sought and raised up by the love of his despised and ill-used daughter. Upon the relations between this pair, accordingly, it was necessary for the author to expend the greatest care, and upon the treatment of those relations the criticism to which the character of Mr. Dombey has been so largely subjected must substantially turn. The unfavourable judgments passed upon it have, in my opinion, not been altogether unjust. The problem obviously was to show how the father's cold indifference towards the daughter gradually becomes jealousy, as he finds that upon her is concentrated, first, the love of his innocent little son, and then that of his haughty second wife; and how hereupon this jealousy deepens into hate. But, unless we are to suppose that Mr. Dombey hated his daughter from the first, the disfavour shown by him on her account to young Walter Gay remains without adequate explanation. His dislike of Florence is not manifestly founded upon his jealousy of what Mrs. Chick calls her brother's "infatuation" for her; and the main motives at work in the unhappy man are either not very skilfully kept asunder, or not very intelligibly intermixed. Nor are the later stages of the relations between father and daughter

altogether satisfactorily conceived. The momentary yielding of Mr. Dombey, after his "coming home" with his new wife, is natural and touching; but his threat to visit his daughter with the consequences of her stepmother's conduct is sheer brutality. The passage in which Mr. Dombey's ultimatum to Mrs. Dombey is conveyed by him in her presence through a third person, is so artificial as to fall not very far short of absurdity. The closing scene which leads to the flight of Florence is undeniably powerful; but it is the developement of the relations between the pair, in which the art of the author is in my judgment occasionally at fault.

As to the general effect of the latter part of the story —or rather of its main plot—which again has been condemned as melodramatic and unnatural, a distinction should be drawn between its incidents and its characters. Neither Edith Dombey nor Mr. Carker is a character of real life. The pride of the former comes very near to bad breeding, and her lapses into sentiment seem artificial lapses. How differently Thackeray would have managed the "high words" between her and her frivolous mother; how differently, for that matter, he *has* managed a not altogether dissimilar scene in the *Newcomes* between Ethel Newcome and old Lady Kew! As for Mr. Carker, with his white teeth and glistening gums, who calls his unhappy brother "Spaniel," and contemplates a life of sensual ease in Sicily, he has the semi-reality of the stage. Possibly, the French stage had helped to suggest the *scène de la pièce* between the fugitives at Dijon—an effective situation, but one which many a novelist might have worked out not less skilfully than Dickens. His own master-hand, however, reasserts itself in the wondrously powerful narrative of Carker's flight and death. Here again, he excites terror—as in

the same book he had evoked pity—by foreshadowing, without prematurely revealing, the end. We know what the morning is to bring which rises in awful tranquillity over the victim of his own sins; and, as in Turner's wild but powerful picture, the engine made by the hand of man for peaceful purposes seems a living agent of wrath.[1]

No other of Dickens' books is more abundantly stocked than this with genuinely comic characters; but nearly all of them, in accordance with the pathetic tone which is struck at the outset, and which never dies out till the story has run its course, are in a more subdued strain of humour. Lord Jeffrey was, I think, warranted in his astonishment that Dickens should devote so much pains to characters like Mrs. Chick and Miss Tox; probably the habit remained with him from his earliest times of authorship, when he had not always distinguished very accurately between the humorous and the *bizarre*. But Polly and the Toodles household, Mrs. Pipchin and her "select infantine boarding-house," and the whole of Doctor Blimber's establishment, from the Doctor himself down to Mr. Toots, and up again, in the scale of intellect, to Mr. Feeder, B.A., are among the most admirable of all the great humorist's creations. Against this ample provision for her poor little brother's nursing and training Florence has to set but her one Susan Nipper; but she is a host in herself, an absolutely original character among the thousands of *soubrettes* that are known to comedy and fiction, and one of the best

[1] It is perhaps worth pointing out, though it is not surprising, that Dickens had a strong sense of what I may call the poetry of the railway train. Of the effect of the weird *Signalman's Story* in one of his Christmas numbers, it is not very easy to rid oneself. There are excellent descriptions of the *rapidity* of a railway journey in the first chapter of *The Lazy Tour*, and in another *Household Words* paper, called *A Flight*.

tonic mixtures ever composed out of much humour and not a few grains of pathos. Her tartness has a cooling flavour of its own; but it is the Mrs. Pipchinses only upon whom she acts, as their type acted upon her, "like early gooseberries." Of course she has a favourite figure of speech belonging to herself, which rhetoricians would probably class among the figures "working by surplusage:"

"Your Toxes and your Chickses may draw out my two front double teeth, Mrs. Richards, but that's no reason why I need offer 'em the whole set."

Dickens was to fall very largely into this habit of "labelling" his characters, as it has been called, by particular tricks or terms of speech; and there is a certain excess in this direction already in *Dombey and Son*, where not only Miss Nipper and Captain Cuttle and Mr. Toots, but Major Bagstock too and Cousin Feenix, are thus furnished forth. But the invention is still so fresh and the play of humour so varied, that this mannerism cannot be said as yet seriously to disturb them. A romantic charm of a peculiar kind clings to honest Captain Cuttle and the quaint home over which he mounts guard during the absence of its owner. The nautical colouring and concomitant fun apart—for only Smollett could have drawn Jack Bunsby's fellow, though the character in his hands would have been differently accentuated—Dickens has never approached more nearly to the manner of Sir Walter Scott than in this singularly attractive part of his book. Elsewhere the story passes into that sphere of society in describing which Dickens was, as a novelist, rarely very successful. But though Edith is cold and unreal, there is, it cannot be denied, human nature in the pigments and figments of her hideous old mother; and, to outward appearance at

all events, the counterparts of her apoplectic admirer, Major Bagstock, still pace those pavements and promenades which it suits them to frequent. Cousin Feenix is likewise very far from impossible, and is besides extremely delightful—and a good fellow too at bottom, so that the sting of the satire is here taken away. On the other hand, the meeting between the *sacs et parchemins* at Mr. Dombey's house is quite out of focus.

The book has other heights and depths, and pleasant and unpleasant parts and passages. But enough has been said to recall the exuberant creative force, and the marvellous strength of pathos and humour which *Dombey and Son* proves that Dickens, now near the very height of his powers as a writer of fiction, possessed. In one of his public readings many years afterwards, when he was reciting the adventures of Little Dombey, he narrates that "a very good fellow," whom he noticed in the stalls, could not refrain from wiping the tears out of his eyes as often as he thought that Toots was coming on. And just as Toots had become a reality to this good fellow, so Toots and Toots' little friend, and divers other personages in this story, have become realities to half the world that reads the English tongue, and to many besides. What higher praise could be given to this wonderful book? Of all the works of its author none has more powerfully and more permanently taken hold of the imagination of its readers. Though he conjured up only pictures familiar to us from the aspect of our own streets and our own homes, he too wielded a wizard's wand.

After the success of *Dombey*, it might have seemed that nothing further was wanting to crown the prosperity of Dickens' literary career. While the publication of this

story was in progress he had concluded arrangements for the issue of his collected writings, in a cheap edition, which began in the year 1847, and which he dedicated "to the English people, in whose approval, if the books be true in spirit, they will live, and out of whose memory, if they be false, they will very soon die." He who could thus proudly appeal to posterity was already, beyond all dispute, the people's chosen favourite among its men of letters. That position he was not to lose so long as he lived; but even at this time the height had not been reached to which (in the almost unanimous judgment of those who love his writings) he was in his next work to attain.

CHAPTER IV.

DAVID COPPERFIELD.

1847—1851.

THE five years, reckoned roughly, from the beginning of 1847 to the close of 1851, were most assuredly the season in which the genius of Dickens produced its richest and rarest fruit. When it opened he was still at work upon *Dombey and Son*; towards its end he was already engaged upon the earliest portions of *Bleak House*. And it was during the interval that he produced a book cherished by himself with an affection differing in kind, as well as in degree, from the common fondness of an author for his literary offspring, and a pearl without a peer among the later fictions of our English school—*David Copperfield*. To this period also belong, it is true, not a few lesser productions of the same ready pen; for the last of his Christmas books was written in 1848, and in 1850 his weekly periodical, *Household Words*, began to run its course. There was much play too in these busy years, but all more or less of the kind which his good-humoured self-irony afterwards very correctly characterised:

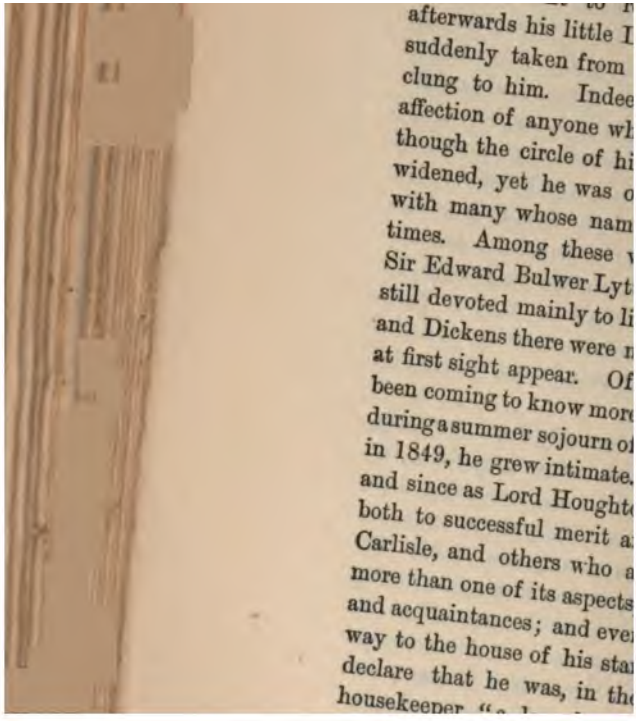
"Play!" said Thomas Idle. "Here is a man goes systematically tearing himself to pieces, and putting himself through an incessant course of training as if he were always under articles

to fight a match for the champion's belt, and he calls it 'Play.' Play!" exclaimed Thomas Idle, scornfully contemplating his one boot in the air; "you can't play. You don't know what it is. You make work of everything!"

"A man," added the same easy philosopher, "who can do nothing by halves appears to me to be a fearful man." And as at all times in Dickens' life, so most emphatically in these years when his physical powers seemed ready to meet every demand, and the elasticity of his mind seemed equal to every effort, he did nothing by halves. Within this short space of time, not only did he write his best book, and conduct a weekly journal of solid merit through its most trying stage, but he also established his reputation as one of the best "unpolitical" speakers in the country; and as an amateur actor and manager successfully weathered what may be called three theatrical seasons, to the labours and glories of which it would be difficult to find a parallel even in the records of that most exacting of all social amusements. One likes to think of him in these years of vigorous manhood, no longer the fair youth with the flowing locks of Maclise's charming portrait, but not yet, I suppose, altogether the commanding and rather stern presence of later years. Mr. Frith's portrait was not painted till 1859, by which time the face occasionally had a more set expression, and the entire personality a more weather-beaten appearance than this well-known picture suggests. But even eight years before this date, when Dickens was acting in Lord Lytton's comedy the part of a young man of mode, Mr. Sala's well-known comparison of his outward man to "some prosperous sea-captain home from a sea-voyage," was thought applicable to him by another shrewd observer, Mr. R. H. Horne, who says that, fashionable "make-up"

notwithstanding, "he presented a figure that would have made a good portrait of a Dutch privateer after having taken a capital prize." And in 1856, Ary Scheffer, to whom when sitting for his portrait he had excused himself for being a difficult subject, "received the apology as strictly his due, and said with a vexed air: 'At this moment, *mon cher* Dickens, you look more like an energetic Dutch admiral than anything else;' for which I apologised again." In 1853, in the sympathetic neighbourhood of Boulogne, he was "growing a moustache," and, by 1856, a beard of the *Henri Quatre* type had been added; but even before that time we may well believe that he was, as Mr. Sala says, "one of the few men whose individuality was not effaced by the mournful conventionality of evening dress." Even in morning dress he unconsciously contrived, born actor as he was, to have something unusual about him; and, if report speaks the truth, even at the seaside, when most prodigal of ease, he was careful to dress the character.

The five years of which more especially I am speaking, brought him repeatedly face to face with the public, and within hearing of the applause that was becoming more and more of a necessity to him. They were thus unmistakeably among the very happiest years of his life. The shadow that was to fall upon his home can hardly yet have been visible even in the dim distance. For this the young voices were too many and too fresh around him behind the garden-wall in Devonshire Terrace, and among the autumnal corn on the cliffs at Broadstairs. "They are all in great force," he writes to his wife, in September, 1850, and "much excited with the expectation of receiving you on Friday;" and I only wish I had space to quote the special report sent on this occasion to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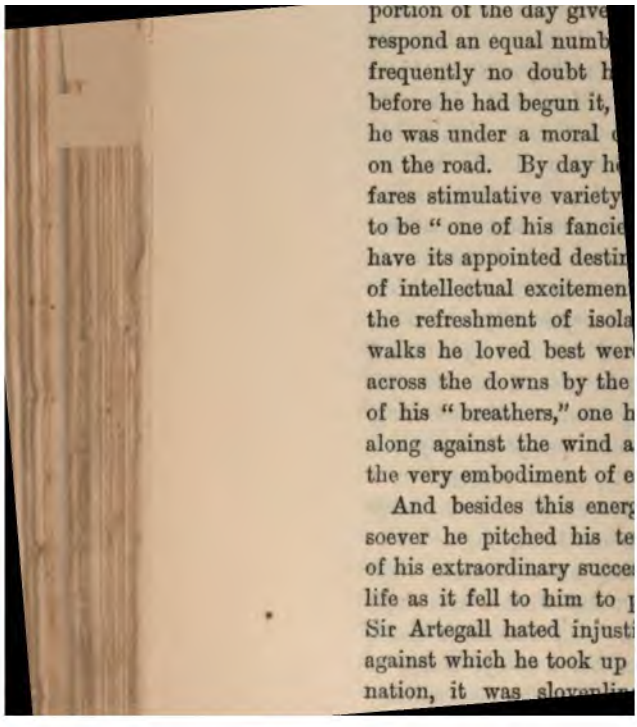
"strolling" through the chief towns of the kingdom at the head of a large company of ladies and gentlemen, according to the description which he put into Mrs. Gamp's mouth, "with a great box of papers under his arm, a-talking to everybody wery indistinct, and exciting of himself dreadful." But since under ordinary circumstances he made, even in outward matters and arrangements of detail, a home for himself wherever he was, and as a rule cared little for the society of companions whose ideas and ways of life were foreign to his own, certain habits had become second nature to him, and to others he adhered with sophistical tenacity. He was an early riser, if for no other reason, because every man in whose work imagination plays its part must sometimes be alone; and Dickens has told us that there was to him something incomparably solemn in the still solitude of the morning. But it was only exceptionally, and when hard pressed by the necessities of his literary labours, that he wrote before breakfast; in general he was contented with the ordinary working hours of the morning, not often writing after luncheon, and, except in early life, never in the evening. Ordinarily, when engaged on a work of fiction, he considered three of his not very large MS. pages a good, and four an excellent, day's work; and, while very careful in making his corrections clear and unmistakeable, he never rewrote what a morning's labour had ultimately produced. On the other hand, he was frequently slow in beginning a story, being, as he himself says, affected by something like despondency at such times, or, as he elsewhere humorously puts it, "going round and round the idea, as you see a bird in his cage go about and about his sugar before he touches it." A temperate liver, he was at the same time a zealous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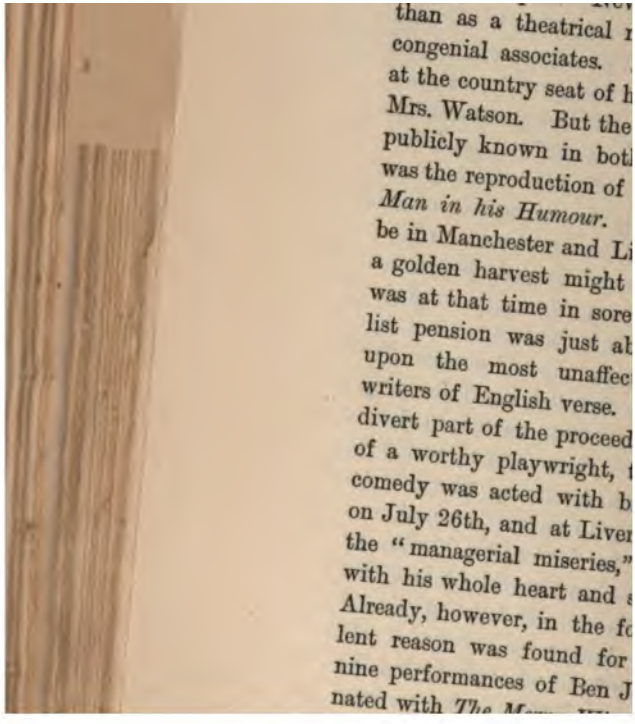
were all fixed beforehand, and it was seldom that he failed to adhere to what he had fixed." Like most men endowed with a superfluity of energy, he prided himself on his punctuality; he could not live in a room or in a house till he had put every piece of furniture into its proper place, nor could he begin to work till all his writing-gear was at hand, with no item missing or misplaced. Yet he did not, like so many, combine with these habits and tendencies a saving disposition; "no man," he said of himself, "attaches less importance to the possession of money, or less disparagement to the want of it, than I do." His circumstances, though easy, were never such as to warrant a display to which perhaps certain qualities of his character might have inclined him; even at a much later date he described himself—rather oddly perhaps—as "a man of moderate savings, always supporting a very expensive public position." But, so far as I can gather, he never had a reasonable want which he could not and did not satisfy, though at the same time he cared for very few of the pursuits or amusements that are apt to drain much larger resources than his. He never had to think twice about country or seaside quarters; wherever it might suit his purpose or fancy to choose them, at one of his south-coast haunts or, for his wife's health, at Malvern, thither he went; and when the whim seized him for a trip *en garçon* to any part of England or to Paris, he had only to bid the infallible Anne pack his trunk. He was a provident as well as an affectionate father; but the cost of educating his numerous family seems to have caused him no serious anxiety; in 1849 he sent his eldest son to Eton. And while he had sworn a kind of *vendetta* against begging-letter writers, and afterwards used to parry the attacks of his pertinacious enemies by means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than Dickens' readiness to serve the interests of an actor with whom, but for his own generous temper, he would only a few months before have been involved in a wordy quarrel. In *The Merry Wives*, the manager acted Justice Shallow to Mark Lemon's Falstaff. Dame Quickly was played by Mrs. Cowden Clarke, who speedily became a favourite correspondent of Dickens. But the climax of these excitements arrived in the year of wonders, 1851, when, with a flourish of trumpets resounding through the world of fashion as well as of letters, the comedy, *Not so Bad as We Seem*, written for the occasion by Bulwer Lytton, was performed under Dickens' management at Devonshire House, in the presence of the Queen, for the benefit of the Guild of Literature and Art. The object was a noble one, though the ultimate result of the scheme has been an almost pitiable failure; and nothing was spared, by the host or the actors, to make the effect worthy of it. While some of the most popular men of letters took parts in the clever and effective play, its scenery was painted by some of the most eminent among English artists. Dickens was fired by the ardour of the enterprise, and proceeding on his principle that the performance could not possibly "be a success if the smallest peppercorn of arrangement were omitted," covered himself and his associates with glory. From Devonshire House play and theatre were transferred to the Hanover Square Rooms, where the farce of *Mr. Nightingale's Diary* was included in the performance, of which some vivid reminiscences have been published by one of the few survivors of that noble company, Mr. R. H. Horne. Other accounts corroborate his recollections of the farce, which was the triumph of "gag," and would have been reckoned a

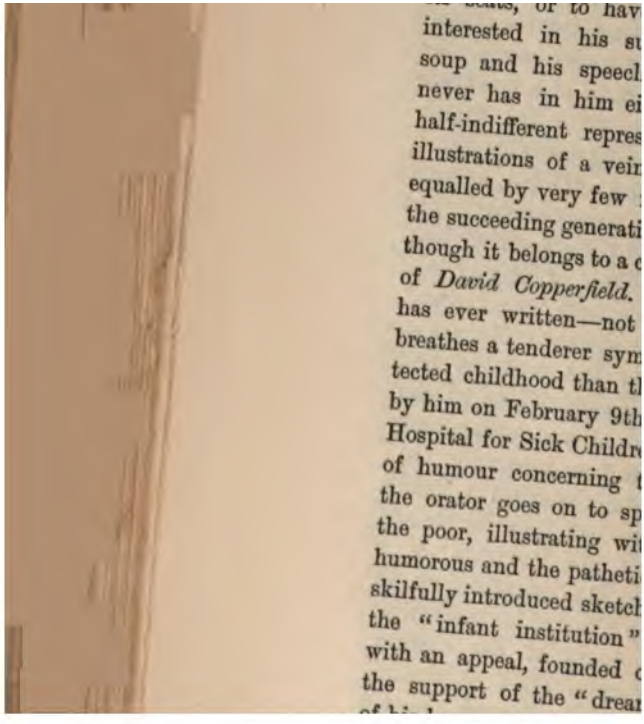
masterpiece in the old *commedia dell' arte*. The characters played by Dickens included Sam Weller turned waiter; a voluble barrister by the name of Mr. Gabblewig; a hypochondriac suffering from a prescription of mustard and milk; the Gampish mother of a charity-boy (Mr. Egg); and her brother, a stone-deaf old sexton, who appeared to be "at least ninety years of age." The last-named assumption seems to have been singularly effective:

"After repeated shoutings ('It's of no use whispering to me, young man') of the word 'buried'—'*Brewed!* oh yes, sir, I have brewed many a good gallon of ale in my time. The last batch I brewed, sir, was finer than all the rest—the best ale ever brewed in the county. It used to be called in our parts here, "Samson with his hair on!" in allusion'—here his excitement shook the tremulous frame into coughing and wheezing—'in allusion to its great strength.' He looked from face to face to see if his feat was duly appreciated, and his venerable jest understood by those around; and then, softly repeating, with a glimmering smile, 'in allusion to its great strength!' he turned about, and made his exit, like one moving towards his own grave while he thinks he is following the funeral of another."

From London the company travelled into the country, where their series of performances was not closed till late in the succeeding year, 1852. Dickens was from first to last the manager, and the ruling spirit of the undertaking. Among his latest recruits, Mr. Wilkie Collins is specially mentioned by Forster. The acquaintance which thus began soon ripened into a close and lasting friendship, and became, with the exception of that with Forster himself, the most important of all Dickens' personal intimacies for the history of his career as an author.

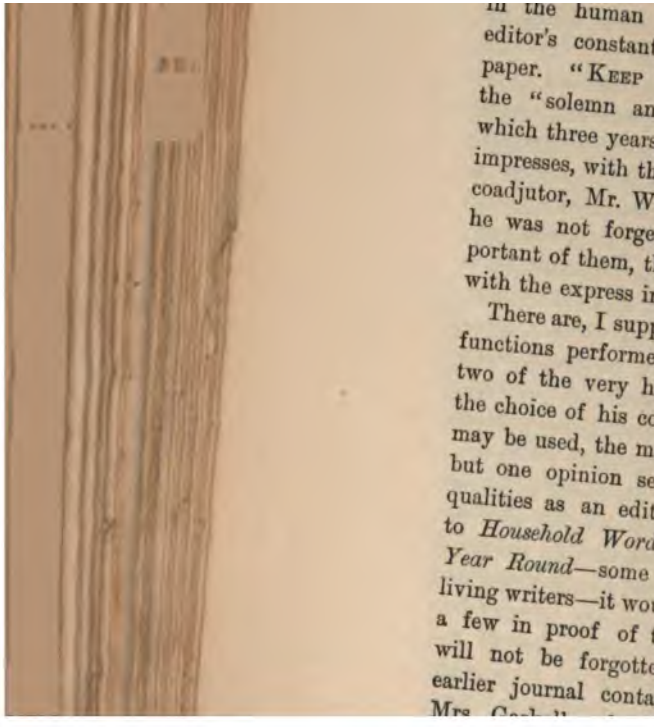
Speech-making was not in quite the same sense, or to quite the same degree, as amateur acting and managing, a

voluntary labour on Dickens' part. Not that he was one of those to whom the task of occasionally addressing a public audience is a pain or even a burden. Indeed, he was a born orator; for he possessed both that strong and elastic imaginative power which enables a man to place himself at once in sympathy with his audience, and that gift of speech, pointed, playful, and where necessary impetuous, which pleads well in any assembly for any cause. He had moreover the personal qualifications of a handsome manly presence, a sympathetic eye, and a fine flexible voice which, as his own hints on public speaking show, he managed with care and intelligence. He had, he says, "fought with beasts (oratorically) in divers arenas." But though a speaker in whom ease bred force, and force ease, he was the reverse of a mere builder of phrases and weaver of periods. "Mere holding forth," he declared, "I utterly detest, abominate, and abjure." His innate hatred of talk for mere talk's sake had doubtless been intensified by his early reporting experiences, and by what had become his stereotyped notion of our parliamentary system. At the Administration Reform meeting in 1855 he stated that he had never before attended a public meeting. On the other hand, he had been for already several years in great request for meetings of a different kind, concerned with the establishment or advancement of educational or charitable institutions in London and other great towns of the country. His addresses from the chair were often of remarkable excellence; and this not merely because crowded halls and increased subscription-lists were their concomitants, and because the happiness of his humour—never out of season, and even on such occasions often singularly prompt—sent everyone home in good spirits.



and pathos on behalf of his clients, the poor actors, when, unknown to him, a little child of his own was lying dead at home. But in these years of his life, as indeed at all times, his voice was at the service of such causes as had his sympathy; it was heard at Birmingham, at Leeds, at Glasgow; distance was of little moment to his energetic nature; and as to trouble, how could he do anything by halves?

There was yet a third kind of activity, distinct from that of literary work pure and simple, in which Dickens in these years for the first time systematically engaged. It has been seen how he had long cherished the notion of a periodical conducted by himself, and marked by a unity of design which should make it in a more than ordinary sense his own paper. With a genius like his, which attached itself to the concrete, very much depended at the outset upon the choice of a title. *The Cricket* could not serve again, and for some time the notion of an omnipresent *Shadow*, with something, if possible, tacked to it "expressing the notion of its being cheerful, useful, and always welcome," seemed to promise excellently. For a rather less ambitious design, however, a rather less ambitious title was sought, and at last fortunately found, in the phrase, rendered proverbial by Shakespeare, "*Household Words*." "We hope," he wrote a few weeks before the first number appeared, on March 30th, 1850, "to do some solid good, and we mean to be as cheery and pleasant as we can." But *Household Words*, which in form and in cost was to be a paper for the multitude, was to be something more than agreeable and useful and cheap. It was to help in casting out the many devils that had taken up their abode in popular periodical literature, the "bastards of the Mountain," and the foul fiends who



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the distinction belonging to the names of Forster and Mr. Henry Morley, together with humorous observers of men and things such as Mr. Sala and Albert Smith. On the other hand, *Household Words* had what every literary journal ought to have, an individuality of its own; and this individuality was of course that of its editor. The mannerisms of Dickens' style afterwards came to be imitated by some among his contributors; but the general unity perceptible in the journal was the natural and legitimate result of the fact that it stood under the independent control of a vigorous editor, assisted by a sub-editor—Mr. W. H. Wills—of rare trustworthiness. Dickens had a keen eye for selecting subjects from a definite field, a ready skill for shaping, if necessary, the articles accepted by him, and a genius for providing them with expressive and attractive titles. Fiction and poetry apart, these articles have mostly a social character or bearing, although they often deviate into the pleasant paths of literature or art, and usually, but by no means always, the scenes or associations with which they connect themselves are of England, English.

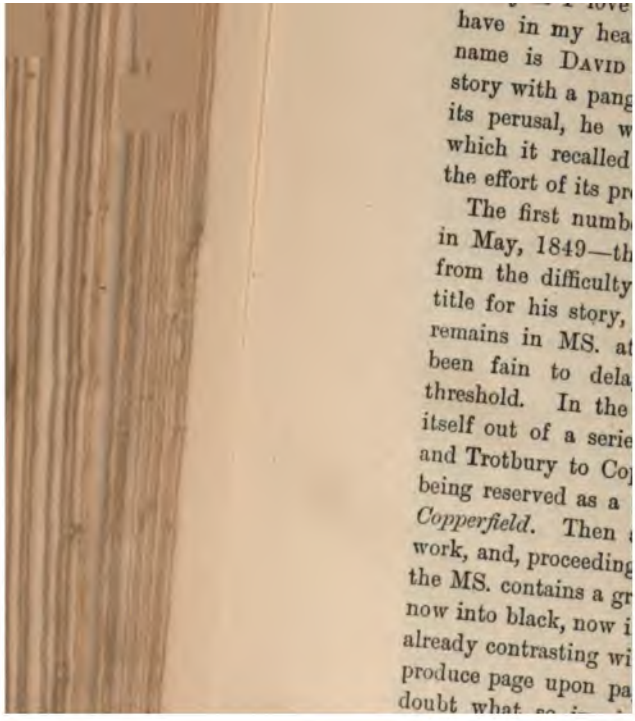
Nothing could surpass the unflagging courtesy shown by Dickens towards his contributors, great or small, old or new, and his patient interest in their endeavours, while he conducted *Household Words*, and afterwards *All the Year Round*. Of this there is evidence enough to make the records of the office in Wellington Street a pleasant page in the history of journalism. He valued a good workman when he found him, and was far too reasonable and generous to put his own stamp upon all the good metal that passed through his hands. Even in his Christmas Numbers he left the utmost possible freedom

to his associates. Where he altered or modified it was as one who had come to know the pulse of the public; and he was not less considerate with novices, than he was frank and explicit with experts, in the writer's art. The articles in his journal being anonymous, he was not tempted to use names as baits for the public, though many who wrote for him were men or women of high literary reputation. And he kept his doors open. While some editors deem it their duty to ward off would-be contributors, as some ministers of state think it theirs to get rid of deputations, Dickens sought to ignore instead of jealously guarding the boundaries of professional literature. Nothing in this way ever gave him greater delight than to have welcomed and published several poems sent to him under a feigned name, but which he afterwards discovered to be the first-fruits of the charming poetical talent of Miss Adelaide Procter, the daughter of his old friend "Barry Cornwall."

In the preparation of his own papers, or of those which, like the Christmas Numbers, he composed conjointly with one or more of his familiars, he spared no labour and thought no toil too great. At times, of course, he, like all periodical writers who cannot be merry every Wednesday or caustic every Saturday, felt the pressure of the screw—"as to two comic articles," he exclaims on one occasion, "or two any sort of articles, out of me, that's the intensest extreme of no-goism." But, as a rule, no great writer ever ran more gaily under his self-imposed yoke. His "Uncommercial Travels," as he at a later date happily christened them, familiarised him with whatever parts or aspects of London his long walks had still left unexplored; and he was as conscientious in hunting up the details of a complicated subject as in finding out the secrets of an obscure pursuit or trade.

Accomplished antiquarians and "commissioners" assisted him in his labours; but he was no *roi fainéant* on the editorial sofa which he so complacently describes. Whether he was taking *A Walk in a Workhouse*, or knocking at the door of another with the supernumerary waifs in Whitechapel, or *On* (night) *Duty with Inspector Field* among the worst of the London slums, he was always ready to see with his own eyes; after which the photographic power of his pen seemed always capable of doing the rest. Occasionally he treats topics more properly journalistic, but he is most delightful when he takes his ease in his *English* or his *French Watering Place*, or carries his readers with him on *A Flight to Paris*, bringing before them, as it were, in breathless succession, every inch of the familiar journey. Happiest of all is he when, with his friend Mr. Wilkie Collins—this, however, not until the autumn of 1857—he starts on *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, the earlier chapters of which furnish some of the best specimens of his most humorous prose. Neither at the same time does he forget himself to enforce the claim of his journal to strengthen the imaginary side of literature. In an assumed character he allows a veteran poet to carry him *By Rail to Parnassus*, and even good-humouredly banters an old friend, George Cruikshank, for having committed *Frauds on the Fairies* by re-editing legendary lore with the view of inculcating the principle of Total Abstinence.

Such, then, were some of the channels in which the intense mental and physical energy of Dickens found a congenial outlet in these busy years. Yet in the very midst of this multifarious activity the mysterious and controlling power of his genius enabled him to collect himself for the composition of a work of fiction which, as



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aware of the pang it must have cost Dickens to lay bare, though to unsuspecting eyes, the story of experiences which he had hitherto kept all but absolutely secret, and to which his own mind could not recur without a quivering sensitiveness. No reader could trace, as the memory of Dickens always must have traced, some of the most vivid of those experiences, imbued though they were with the tints of a delightfully playful humour, in the doings and dealings of Mr. Wilkins Micawber, whose original, by a strange coincidence, was passing tranquilly away out of life, while his comic counterpart was blossoming into a whimsical immortality. And no reader could divine, what very probably even the author may hardly have ventured to confess to himself, that in the lovely little idyll of the loves of Doady and Dora—with Jip, as Dora's father might have said, intervening—there were, besides the reminiscences of an innocent juvenile amour, the vestiges of a man's unconfessed though not altogether unrepressed disappointment—the sense that "there was always something wanting." But in order to be affected by a personal or autobiographical element in a fiction or poem, it is by no means necessary to be aware of its actual bearing and character, or even of its very existence; *Amelia* would gain little by illustrative notes concerning the experiences of the first Mrs. Fielding. To excite in a work of fiction the peculiar kind of interest of which I am speaking, the existence of an autobiographical substratum need not be apparent in it, nor need its presence be even suspected. Enough, if it be *there*. But it had far better be away altogether, unless the novelist has so thoroughly fused this particular stream of metal with the mass filling his mould that the result is an integral artistic whole. Such was, however, the case with *David Copperfield*, which of

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experiences of David, of which—except in its very beginnings—it forms no integral part; and throughout the reader is haunted by a presentiment of the coming catastrophe, though unable to divine the tragic force and justice of its actual accomplishment. A touch altered here and there in Steerforth, with the Rosa Dartle episode excluded or greatly reduced, and this part of *David Copperfield* might challenge comparison as to workmanship with the whole literature of modern fiction.

Of the idyll of Davy and Dora—what shall I say? Its earliest stages are full of the gayest comedy. What, for instance, could surpass the history of the picnic—where was it? perhaps it was near Guildford. At that feast an imaginary rival, "Red Whisker," made the salad—how could they eat it?—and "voted himself into the charge of the wine-cellar, which he constructed, *being an ingenious beast*, in the hollow trunk of a tree." Better still are the backward ripples in the course of true love; best of all the deep wisdom of Miss Mills, in whose nature mental trial and suffering supplied, in some measure, the place of years. In the narrative of the young housekeeping, David's real trouble is most skilfully mingled with the comic woes of the situation; and thus the idyll almost imperceptibly passes into the last phase, where the clouds dissolve in a rain of tears. The genius which conceived and executed these closing scenes was touched by a pity towards the fictitious creatures of his own imagination, which melted his own heart; and thus his pathos is here irresistible.

The inventive power of Dickens in none of his other books indulged itself so abundantly in the creation of eccentric characters, but neither was it in any so admirably tempered by taste and feeling. It contains no character

which could strictly be called grotesque, unless it be little Miss Mowcher. Most of her outward peculiarities Dickens had copied from a living original, but receiving a remonstrance from the latter he good-humouredly altered the use he had intended to make of the character, and thereby spoilt what there was in it—not much in my opinion—to spoil. Mr. Dick belongs to a species of eccentric personages—mad people in a word—for which Dickens as a writer had a curious liking; but though there is consequently no true humour in this character, it helps to bring out the latent tenderness in another. David's Aunt is a figure which none but a true humorist such as Sterne or Dickens could have drawn, and she must have sprung from the author's brain armed *cap-à-pie* as she appeared in her garden before his little double. Yet even Miss Betsey Trotwood was not altogether a creation of the fancy, for at Broadstairs the locality is still pointed out where the "one great outrage of her life" was daily renewed. In the other chief characters of this story the author seems to rely entirely on natural truthfulness. He must have had many opportunities of noting the ways of seamen and fishermen, but the occupants of the old boat near Yarmouth possess the typical characteristics with which the experience and the imagination of centuries have agreed to credit the "salt" division of mankind. Again, he had had his own experience of shabby-genteel life, and of the struggle which he had himself seen a happy and a buoyant temperament maintaining against a sea of trouble. But Mr. Micawber, whatever features may have been transferred to him, is the type of a whole race of men who will not vanish from the face of the earth so long as the hope which lives eternal in the human breast is only temporarily suspended by the laws of debtor and

creditor, and is always capable of revival with the aid of a bowl of milk-punch. A kindlier and a merrier, a more humorous and a more genuine character was never conceived than this; and if anything was wanted to complete the comicality of the conception, it was the wife of his bosom with the twins at her own, and her mind made up *not* to desert Mr. Micawber. Delightful too in his way, though of a class more common in Dickens, is Tommy Traddles, the genial picture of whose married life in chambers in Gray's Inn, with the dearest girl in the world and her five sisters, including the beauty, on a visit, may have been suggested by kindly personal reminiscences of youthful days. In contrast to these characters, the shambling, fawning, villainous hypocrisy of Uriah Heep is a piece of intense and elaborate workmanship, almost cruelly done without being overdone. It was in his figures of hypocrites that Dickens' satirical power most diversely displayed itself; and by the side of Uriah Heep in this story, literally so in the prison-scene at the close, stands another species of the race, the valet Littimer, a sketch which Thackeray himself could not have surpassed.

Thus, then, I must leave the book, with its wealth of pathos and humour, with the glow of youth still tinging its pages, but with the gentler mood of manhood pervading it from first to last. The *reality* of *David Copperfield* is, perhaps, the first feature in it likely to strike the reader new to its charms; but a closer acquaintance will produce, and familiarity will enhance, the sense of its wonderful *art*. Nothing will ever destroy the popularity of a work of which it can truly be said that, while offering to his muse a gift not less beautiful than precious, its author put into it his life's blood.

CHAPTER V.

CHANGES.

1852--1858.

I HAVE spoken of both the intellectual and the physical vigour of Charles Dickens as at their height in the years of which the most enduring fruit was the most delightful of all his fictions. But there was no break in his activity after the achievement of this or any other of his literary successes, and he was never harder at work than during the seven years of which I am about to speak, although in this period also occasionally he was to be found hard at play. Its beginning saw him settled in his new and cheerfully-furnished abode at Tavistock House, of which he had taken possession in October, 1851. At its close he was master of the country residence which had been the dream of his childhood, but he had become a stranger to that tranquillity of mind without which no man's house is truly his home. Gradually, but surely, things had then, or a little before, come to such a pass that he wrote to his faithful friend: "I am become incapable of rest. I am quite confident I should rust, break and die, if I spared myself. Much better to die, doing. What I am in that way, nature made me first, and my way of life has of late, alas! confirmed." Early in 1852, the youngest of his children had been born to

him—the boy whose babyhood once more revived in him a tenderness the depth of which no eccentric humours and fantastic *sobriquets* could conceal. In May, 1858, he had separated from the mother of his children, and though self-sacrificing affection was at hand to watch over them and him, yet that domestic life of which he had become the prophet and poet to hundreds of thousands was in its fairest and fullest form at an end for himself.

In the earlier of these years, Dickens' movements were still very much of the same kind, and varied much after the same fashion as in the period described in my last chapter. In 1852 the series of amateur performances in the country was completed; but time was found for a summer residence in Camden Crescent, Dover. During his stay there, and during most of his working hours in this and the following year—the spring of which was partly spent at Brighton—he was engaged upon his new story, *Bleak House*, published in numbers dating from March, 1852, to September, 1853. "To let you into a secret," he had written to his lively friend, Miss Mary Boyle, from Dover, "I am not quite sure that I ever did like, or ever shall like anything quite so well as *Copperfield*. But I foresee, I think, some very good things in *Bleak House*." There is no reason to believe that, by the general public, this novel was at the time of its publication a whit less favourably judged or less eagerly read than its predecessor. According to the author's own testimony, it "took extraordinarily, especially during the last five or six months" of its issue, and "retained its immense circulation from the first, beating dear old *Copperfield* by a round ten thousand or more." To this day the book has its stanch friends, some of whom would perhaps be slow to confess by which of the elements in the story they are most forcibly attracted. On the other

hand, *Bleak House* was probably the first of Dickens' works which furnished a suitable text to a class of censors whose precious balms have since descended upon his head with constant reiteration. The power of amusing being graciously conceded to the "man of genius," his book was charged with "absolute want of construction," and with being a heterogeneous compound made up of a meagre and melodramatic story, and a number of "odd folks that have to do with a long Chancery suit." Of the characters themselves it was asserted that, though in the main excessively funny, they were more like caricatures of the stage than studies from nature; some approval was bestowed upon particular figures, but rather as types of the influence of externals than as real individualities; and while the character of the poor crossing-sweeper was generously praised, it was regretted that Dickens should never have succeeded in drawing "a man or woman whose lot is cast among the high-born or wealthy." He belonged, unfortunately, "in literature to the same class as his illustrator, Hablot Browne, in design, though he far surpasses the illustrator in range and power." In other words, he was essentially a caricaturist.

As applied to *Bleak House*, with which I am at present alone concerned, this kind of censure was in more ways than one unjust. So far as constructive skill was concerned, the praise given by Forster to *Bleak House* may be considered excessive; but there can be no doubt that, as compared, not with *Pickwick* and *Nickleby*, but with its immediate predecessor, *David Copperfield*, this novel exhibits a decided advance in that respect. In truth, Dickens in *Bleak House* for the first time emancipated himself from that form of novel which, in accordance with his great eighteenth-century favourites, he had

hitherto more or less consciously adopted—the novel of adventure, of which the person of the hero, rather than the machinery of the plot, forms the connecting element. It may be that the influence of Mr. Wilkie Collins was already strong upon him, and that the younger writer, whom Dickens was about this time praising for his unlikeness to the "conceited idiots who suppose that volumes are to be tossed off like pancakes," was already teaching something to, as well as learning something from, the elder. It may also be that the criticism which as editor of *Household Words* Dickens was now in the habit of judiciously applying to the fictions of others, unconsciously affected his own methods and processes. Certain it is that from this point of view *Bleak House* may be said to begin a new series among his works of fiction. The great Chancery suit and the fortunes of those concerned in it are not a disconnected background from which the mystery of Lady Dedlock's secret stands forth in relief; but the two main parts of the story are skilfully interwoven as in a Spanish double-plot. Nor is the success of the general action materially affected by the circumstance that the tone of Esther Summerson's diary is not altogether true. At the same time, there is indisputably some unevenness in the construction of *Bleak House*. It drags, and drags very perceptibly, in some of its earlier parts. On the other hand, the interest of the reader is strongly revived, when that popular favourite, Mr. Inspector Bucket, appears on the scene, and when, more especially in the admirably vivid narrative of Esther's journey with the detective, the nearness of the catastrophe exercises its exciting influence. Some of the machinery, moreover—such as the Smallweed family's part in the plot—is tiresome; and particular incidents are intolerably horrible or absurd—

such as, on the one hand, the spontaneous combustion (which is proved possible by the analogy of historical facts !), and on the other, the intrusion of the oil-grinding Mr. Chadband into the solemn presence of Sir Leicester Dedlock's grief. But in general the parts of the narrative are well knit together; and there is a subtle skill in the way in which the two main parts of the story converge towards their common close.

The idea of making an impersonal object like a great Chancery suit the centre round which a large and manifold group of characters revolves, seems to savour of a drama rather than of a story. No doubt the theme suggested itself to Dickens with a very real purpose, and on the basis of facts which he might well think warranted him in his treatment of it; for, true artist though he was, the thought of exposing some national defect, of helping to bring about some real reform, was always paramount in his mind over any mere literary conception. *Primâ facie*, at least, and with all due deference to Chancery judges and eminent silk gowns like Mr. Blowers, the length of Chancery suits was a real public grievance, as well as a frequent private calamity. But even as a mere artistic notion, the idea of Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce as diversely affecting those who lived by it, those who rebelled against it, those who died of it, was in its way of unique force; and while Dickens never brought to any other of his subjects so useful a knowledge of its external details—in times gone by he had served a "Kenge and Carboys" of his own—hardly any one of those subjects suggested so wide a variety of aspects for characteristic treatment.

For never before had his versatility in drawing character filled his canvas with so multitudinous and so various a

host of personages. The legal profession, with its servitors and hangers-on of every degree, occupies the centre of the picture. In this group no figure is more deserving of admiration than that of Mr. Tulkinghorn, the eminently respectable family solicitor at whose very funeral, by a four-wheeled affliction, the goodwill of the aristocracy manifests itself. We learn very little about him, and probably care less; but he interests us precisely as we should be interested by the real old family lawyer, about whom we might know and care equally little, were we to find him alone in the twilight, drinking his ancient port in his frescoed chamber in those fields where the shepherds play on Chancery pipes that have no stop. (Mr. Forster, by the way, omitted to point out to his readers, what the piety of American research has since put on record, that Mr. Tulkinghorn's house was a picture of the biographer's own residence.) The portrait of Mr. Vholes, who supports an unassailable but unenviable professional reputation for the sake of "the three dear girls at home," and a father whom he has to support "in the Vale of Taunton," is less attractive; but nothing could be more in its place in the story than the clammy tenacity of this legal ghoul and his "dead glove." Lower down in the great system of the law, we come upon Mr. Guppy and his fellows, the very quintessence of cockney vulgarity, seasoned with a flavour of legal sharpness without which the rankness of the mixture would be incomplete. To the legal group Miss Flite, whose original, if I remember right, used to haunt the Temple as well as the precincts of the Chancery courts, may likewise be said to belong. She is quite legitimately introduced into the story—which cannot be said of all Dickens' madmen—because her madness associates itself with its main theme.

Much admiration has been bestowed upon the figures of an eccentric by- or under-plot in this story, in which the family of the Jellybys and the august Mr. Turveydrop are, actively, or by passive endurance, engaged. The philanthropic section of *le monde où l'on s'ennuie* has never been satirised more tellingly, and, it must be added, more bitterly. Perhaps at the time of the publication of *Bleak House* the activity of our Mrs. Jellybys took a wider and more cosmopolitan sweep than in later days; for we read at the end of Esther's diary how Mrs. Jellyby "has been disappointed in Borrioboola Gha, which turned out a failure in consequence of the King of Borrioboola wanting to sell everybody—who survived the climate—for Rum; but she has taken up with the rights of women to sit in Parliament, and Caddy tells me it is a mission involving more correspondence than the old one." But Mrs. Jellyby's interference in the affairs of other people is after all hurtful only because in busying herself with theirs she forgets her own. The truly offensive benefactress of her fellow-creatures is Mrs. Pardiggle, who, maxim in mouth and tract in hand, turns everything she approaches to stone. Among her victims are her own children, including Alfred, aged five, who has been induced to take an oath "never to use tobacco in any form."

The particular vein of feeling that led Dickens to the delineation of these satirical figures was one which never ran dry with him, and which suggested some forcible-feeble satire in his very last fiction. I call it a vein of feeling only; for he could hardly have argued in cold blood that the efforts which he ridicules were not misrepresented as a whole by his satire. When poor Jo on his deathbed is "asked whether he ever knew a prayer,"

and replies that he could never make anything out of those spoken by the gentlemen who "came down Tom-all-Alone's a-prayin'," but who "mostly sed as the t'other wuns prayed wrong," the author brings a charge which he might not have found it easy to substantiate. Yet —with the exception of such isolated passages—the figure of Jo is in truth one of the most powerful protests that have been put forward on behalf of the friendless outcasts of our streets. Nor did the romantic element in the conception interfere with the effect of the realistic. If Jo, who seems at first to have been intended to be one of the main figures of the story, is in Dickens' best pathetic manner, the Bagnet family is in his happiest vein of quiet humour. Mr. Inspector Bucket, though not altogether free from mannerism, well deserves the popularity which he obtained. For this character, as the pages of *Household Words* testify, Dickens had made many studies in real life. The detective police-officer had at that time not yet become a standing figure of fiction and the drama, nor had the detective of real life begun to destroy the illusion.

Bleak House was least of all among the novels hitherto published by its author obnoxious to the charge persistently brought against him, that he was doomed to failure in his attempts to draw characters taken from any but the lower spheres of life—in his attempts, in short, to draw ladies and gentlemen. To begin with, one of the most interesting characters in the book—indeed, in its relation to the main idea of the story, the most interesting of all—is the youthful hero, if he is to be so called, Richard Carson. From the very nature of the conception, the character is passive only; but the art and feeling are in their way unsurpassed with which the gradual collapse of a fine

nature is here exhibited. Sir Leicester Dedlock, in some measure intended as a type of his class, has been condemned as wooden and unnatural; and no doubt the machinery of that part of the story in which he is concerned creaks before it gets under way. On the other hand, after the catastrophe has overwhelmed him and his house, he becomes a really fine picture, unmarred by any Grandisonianisms in either thought or phrase, of a true gentleman, bowed but not warped by distress. Sir Leicester's relatives, both dead and living; Volumnia's sprightly ancestress on the wall, and that "fair Dedlock" herself; the whole cousinhood, debilitated and otherwise, but of one mind on such points as William Buffy's blameworthy neglect of his duty *when in office*; all these make up a very probable picture of a house great enough—or thinking itself great enough—to look at the affairs of the world from the family point of view. In Lady Dedlock alone a failure must be admitted; but she, with her wicked double, the uncanny French maid Hortense, exists only for the sake of the plot.

With all its merits, *Bleak House* has little of that charm which belongs to so many of Dickens' earlier stories, and to *David Copperfield* above all. In part at least, this may be due to the excessive severity of the task which Dickens had set himself in *Bleak House*; for hardly any other of his works is constructed on so large a scale, or contains so many characters organically connected with the progress of its plot; and in part, again, to the half-didactic half-satirical purport of the story, which weighs heavily on the writer. An overstrained tone announces itself on the very first page; an opening full of power—indeed, of genius; but pitched in a key which we feel at once will not, without effort, be maintained. On the second

page the prose has actually become verse; or how else can one describe part of the following apostrophe?

"This is the Court of Chancery, which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse, and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance; which gives to monied might the means abundantly of wearing out the right; which so exhausts finances, patience, courage, hope; so overthrows the brain and breaks the heart, that there is not an honourable man among its practitioners who would not give—who does not often give—the warning, 'Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!'"

It was possibly with some thought of giving to *Bleak House* also, though in a different way, the close relation to his experiences of living men to which *David Copperfield* had owed so much, that Dickens introduced into it two *portraits*. Doubtless, at first, his intention had by no means gone so far as this. His constant counsellor always disliked his mixing up in his fictitious characters any personal reminiscences of particular men, experience having shown that in such cases the whole character came out *more like* than the author was aware. Nor can Dickens himself have failed to understand how such an experiment is always tempting, and always dangerous, how it is often irreconcileable with good feeling, and quite as often with good taste. In *Bleak House*, however, it occurred to him to introduce likenesses of two living men, both more or less well known to the public and to himself; and both of individualities too clearly marked for a portrait, or even a caricature, of either to be easily mistaken. Of that art of mystification which the authors of both English and French *romans à*

clef have since practised with so much transient success, he was no master, and fortunately so: for what could be more ridiculous than that the reader's interest in a character should be stimulated, first, by its being evidently the late Lord P–lm–rst–n, or the P—— of O——, and then by its being no less evidently somebody else? It should be added that neither of the two portrait characters in *Bleak House* possesses the least importance for the conduct of the story, so that there is nothing to justify their introduction except whatever excellence may belong to them in themselves.

Lawrence Boythorn is described by Mr. Sydney Colvin as drawn from Walter Savage Landor with his intellectual greatness left out. It was of course unlikely that his intellectual greatness should be left in, the intention obviously being to reproduce what was eccentric in the ways and manner, with a suggestion of what was noble in the character, of Dickens' famous friend. Whether, had he attempted to do so, Dickens could have drawn a picture of the whole Landor, is another question. Landor, who could put into a classic dialogue that sense of the *naïf* to which Dickens is generally a stranger, yet passionately admired the most *sentimental* of all his young friend's poetic figures; and it might almost be said that the intellectual natures of the two men were drawn together by the force of contrast. They appear to have first become intimate with one another during Landor's residence at Bath—which began in 1837—and they frequently met at Gore House. At a celebration of the poet's birthday in his lodgings at Bath, so Forster tells us in his biography of Landor, "the fancy which took the form of Little Nell in the *Curiosity Shop* first dawned on the genius of its creator." In Landor's spacious mind there

was room for cordial admiration of an author, the bent of whose genius differed widely from that of his own; and he could thus afford to sympathise with his whole heart in a creation which men of much smaller intellectual build have pronounced mawkish and unreal. Dickens afterwards gave to one of his sons the names of Walter Landor; and when the old man died at last, *after* his godson, paid him an eloquent tribute of respect in *All the Year Round*. In this paper the personal intention of the character of Boythorn is avowed by implication; but though Landor esteemed and loved Dickens, it might seem matter for wonder, did not eccentrics after all sometimes cherish their own eccentricity, that his irascible nature failed to resent a rather doubtful compliment. For the character of Boythorn is whimsical rather than, in any but the earlier sense of the word, humorous. But the portrait, however imperfect, was in this instance, beyond all doubt, both kindly meant and kindly taken; though it cannot be said to have added to the attractions of the book into which it is introduced.

While no doubt ever existed as to this likeness, the case may not seem so clear with regard to the original of Harold Skimpole. It would be far more pleasant to pass by without notice the controversy—if controversy it can be called—which this character provoked; but a wrong done by one eminent man of letters to another, however unforeseen its extent may have been, and however genuine the endeavour to repair its effect, becomes part of literary history. That the original of Harold Skimpole was Leigh Hunt cannot reasonably be called into question. This assertion by no means precludes the possibility, or probability, that a second original suggested certain

features in the portrait. Nor does it contradict the substantial truthfulness of Dickens' own statement, published in *All the Year Round* after Leigh Hunt's death, on the appearance of the new edition of the *Autobiography* with Thornton Hunt's admirable introduction. While, Dickens then wrote, "he yielded to the temptation of too often making the character speak like his old friend," yet "he no more thought, God forgive him! that the admired original would ever be charged with the imaginary vices of the fictitious creature, than he had himself ever thought of charging the blood of Desdemona and Othello on the innocent Academy model who sat for Iago's leg in the picture. Even as to the mere occasional manner," he declared that he had "altered the whole of that part of the text, when two intimate friends of Leigh Hunt—both still living—discovered too strong a resemblance to his 'way.'" But, while accepting this statement, and suppressing a regret that after discovering the dangerous closeness of the resemblance Dickens should have, quite at the end of the story, introduced a satirical reference to Harold Skimpole's autobiography—Leigh Hunt's having been published only a year or two before—one must confess that the explanation only helps to prove the rashness of the offence. While intending the portrait to keep its own secret from the general public, Dickens at the same time must have wished to gratify a few keen-sighted friends. In March, 1852, he writes to Forster, evidently in reference to the apprehensions of his correspondent: "Browne has done Skimpole, and helped to make him singularly unlike the great original." The "great original" was a man for whom, both before and after this untoward incident in the relations between them, Dickens professed a warm regard, and who, to judge from

the testimony of those who knew him well,[1] and from his unaffected narrative of his own life, abundantly deserved it. A perusal of Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* suffices to show that he used to talk in Skimpole's manner, and even to write in it; that he was at one period of his life altogether ignorant of money matters, and that he cultivated cheerfulness on principle. But it likewise shows that his ignorance of business was acknowledged by him as a misfortune in which he was very far from exulting. "Do I boast of this ignorance?" he writes. "Alas! I have no such respect for the pedantry of absurdity as that. I blush for it, and I only record it out of a sheer painful movement of conscience, as a warning to those young authors who might be led to look upon such folly as a fine thing, which at all events is what I never thought it myself." On the other hand, as his son showed, his cheerfulness, which was not inconsistent with a natural proneness to intervals of melancholy, rested on grounds which were the result of a fine as well as healthy morality. "The value of cheerful opinions," he wrote, in words embodying a moral than Dickens himself was never weary of enforcing, "is inestimable; they will retain a sort of heaven round a man, when everything else might fail him, and consequently they ought to be religiously inculcated upon his children." At the same time, no quality was more conspicuous in his life than his readiness for hard work, even under the most depressing circumstances; and no feature was more marked in his moral character than his

[1] Among these is Mr. Alexander Ireland, the author of the *Bibliography of Leigh Hunt and Haslitt*, who has kindly communicated to me part of his collections concerning the former. The tittle-tattle against Leigh Hunt repeated by Lord Macaulay is, on the face of it, unworthy of notice.

conscientiousness. "In the midst of the sorest temptations," Dickens wrote of him, "he maintained his honesty unblemished by a single stain; and in all public and private transactions he was the very soul of truth and honour." To mix up with the outward traits of such a man the detestable obliquities of Harold Skimpole was an experiment paradoxical even as a mere piece of character-drawing. The merely literary result is a failure, while a wound was needlessly inflicted, if not upon Leigh Hunt himself, at least upon all who cherished his friendship or good name. Dickens seems honestly and deeply to have regretted what he had done, and the extremely tasteful little tribute to Leigh Hunt's poetic gifts, which, some years before the death of the latter, Dickens wrote for *Household Words*,[1] must have partaken of the nature of an *amende honorable*. Neither his subsequent repudiation of unfriendly intentions, nor his earlier exertions on Leigh Hunt's behalf, are to be overlooked, but they cannot undo a mistake which forms an unfortunate incident in Dickens' literary life, singularly free though that life as a whole is from the miseries of personal quarrels, and all the pettinesses with which the world of letters is too familiar.

While Dickens was engaged upon a literary work such as would have absorbed the intellectual energies of most men, he not only wrote occasionally for his journal, but also dictated for publication in it the successive portions of a book altogether outside his usual range of authorship. This was *A Child's History of England*, the only one of his works that was not written by his own hand. A history of England, written by Charles Dickens for his own or anyone else's children, was sure to be a different work from one written under similar circumstances by

[1] *By Rail to Parnassus*, June 16, 1855.

Mr. Freeman or the late M. Guizot. The book, though it cannot be called a success, is however by no means devoid of interest. Just ten years earlier he had written, and printed, a history of England for the benefit of his eldest son, then a hopeful student of the age of five, which was composed, as he informed Douglas Jerrold at the time, "in the exact spirit" of that advanced politician's paper, "for I don't know what I should do if he were to get hold of any Conservative or High Church notions; and the best way of guarding against any such horrible result is, I take it, to wring the parrots' necks in his very cradle." The *Child's History of England* is written in the same spirit, and illustrates more directly, and, it must be added, more coarsely than any of Dickens' other works, his hatred of ecclesiasticism of all kinds. Thus, the account of Dunstan is pervaded by a prejudice which is the fruit of anything but knowledge; Edward the Confessor is "the dreary old" and "the maudlin Confessor;" and the Pope and what belongs to him are treated with a measure of contumely which would have satisfied the heart of Leigh Hunt himself. To be sure, if King John is dismissed as a "miserable brute," King Henry the Eighth is not more courteously designated as a "blot of blood and grease upon the history of England." On the other hand it could hardly be but that certain passages of the national story should be well told by so great a master of narrative; and though the strain in which parts of the history of Charles the Second are recounted strikes one as hardly suitable to the young, to whom irony is in general *caviare* indeed, yet there are touches both in the story of "this merry gentleman"—a designation which almost recalls Fagin—and elsewhere in the book not unworthy of its author. Its patriotic spirit

is quite as striking as its radicalism; and vulgar as some of its expressions must be called, there is a pleasing glow in the passage on King Alfred, which declares the "English-Saxon" character to have been "the greatest character among the nations of the earth;" and there is a yet nobler enthusiasm, such as it would indeed be worth any writer's while to infuse into the young, in the passionate earnestness with which, by means of the story of Agincourt, the truth is enforced that "nothing can make war otherwise than horrible."

This book must have been dictated, and some at least of the latter portion of *Bleak House* written, at Boulogne, where, after a spring sojourn at Brighton, Dickens spent the summer of 1853, and where were also passed the summers of 1854 and 1856. Boulogne, where Le Sage's last years were spent, was *Our French Watering-place*, so graphically described in a paper in *Household Words* as a companion picture to the old familiar Broadstairs. The family were comfortably settled on a green hill-side close to the town, "in a charming garden in a very pleasant country," with "excellent light wines on the premises, French cookery, millions of roses, two cows—for milk-punch—vegetables cut for the pot, and handed in at the kitchen window; five summer-houses, fifteen fountains—with no water in 'em—and thirty-seven clocks—keeping, as I conceive, Australian time, having no reference whatever to the hours on this side of the globe." The energetic owner of the Villa des Moulineaux was the "M. Loyal Devasseur" of *Our French Watering-place*—jovial, convivial, genial, sentimental too as a Buonapartist and a patriot. In 1854 the same obliging personage housed the Dickens family in another abode at the top of the hill, close to the famous Napoleonic column;

but in 1856 they came back to the Moulineaux. The former year had been an exciting one for Englishmen in France, with royal visits to and fro to testify to the *entente cordiale* between the governments. Dickens, notwithstanding his humorous assertions, was only moderately touched by the Sebastopol fever; but when a concrete problem came before him in the shape of a festive demonstration, he addressed himself to it with the irrepressible ardour of the born stage-manager. "In our own proper illumination," he writes on the occasion of the Prince Consort's visit to the camp at Boulogne, "I laid on all the servants, all the children now at home, all the visitors, one to every window, with everything ready to light up on the ringing of a big dinner-bell by your humble correspondent. St. Peter's on Easter Monday was the result."

Of course, at Boulogne, Dickens was cut off neither from his business nor from his private friends. His hospitable invitations were as urgent to his French villa in the summer as to his London house in the winter, and on both sides of the water the *Household Words* familiars were as sure of a welcome from their chief. During his absences from London he could have had no trustier lieutenant than Mr. W. H. Wills, with whom, being always ready to throw himself into a part, he corresponded in an amusing paragraphed semi-official style. And neither in his working nor in his leisure hours had he by this time any more cherished companion than Mr. Wilkie Collins, whose progress towards brilliant success he was watching with the keenest and kindliest interest. With him and his old friend Augustus Egg, Dickens, in October, 1853, started on a tour to Switzerland and Italy, in the course of which

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"the idea laid hold of him by the throat in a very violent manner," and the labour, carried on under conditions of peculiar irksomeness, "used him up," after a quite unaccustomed fashion. The book thus acquired a precision of form and manner which commends it to the French school of criticism rather than to lovers of English humour in its ampler forms and more flowing moods. At the same time, the work has its purpose so visibly imprinted on its front, as almost to forbid our regarding it in the first instance apart from the moral which avowedly it is intended to inculcate. This moral, by no means new with Dickens, has both a negative and a positive side. "Do not harden your hearts," is the negative injunction, more especially do not harden them against the promptings of that human kindness which should draw together man and man, old and young, rich and poor; and keep your sympathies fresh by bringing nourishment to them through channels which prejudice or short-sightedness would fain narrow or stop up. This hortatory purpose assumes the form of invective and even of angry menace; and "utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, commissioners of fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's-eared creeds" are warned: "The poor you have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives, so much in need of ornament; or, in the day of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you."

No authority, however eminent, not even Mr. Ruskin's, is required to teach reflecting minds the infinite

importance of the principles which *Hard Times* was intended to illustrate. Nor is it of much moment whether the illustrations are always exact; whether the "Commissioners of Facts" have reason to protest that the unimaginative character of their processes does not necessarily imply an unimaginative purpose in their ends; whether there is any actual Coketown in existence within a hundred miles of Manchester; or whether it suffices that "everybody knew what was meant, but every cotton-spinning town said it was the other cotton-spinning town." The chief personal grievance of Stephen Blackpool has been removed or abated, but the "muddle" is not yet altogether cleared up which prevents the nation and the "national dustmen," its lawgivers, from impartially and sympathetically furthering the interest of all classes. In a word, the moral of *Hard Times* has not yet lost its force, however imperfect or unfair the method may have been in which it is urged in the book.

Unfortunately, however, a work of art with a didactic purpose is only too often prone to exaggerate what seems of special importance for the purpose in question, and to heighten contrasts which seem likely to put it in the clearest light. "Thomas Gradgrind, sir," who announces himself with something of the genuine Lancashire roll, and his system are a sound and a laughable piece of satire to begin with, only here and there marred by the satirist's imperfect knowledge of the details which he caricatures. The "Manchester School," which the novel strives to expose, is in itself to a great extent a figment of the imagination, which to this day serves to round many a hollow period in oratory and journalism. Who, it may fairly be asked, were the parliamentary politicians satirised in the member for Coketown, deaf and blind to

any consideration but the multiplication table. But in any case the cause hardly warrants one of its consequences as depicted in the novel—the utter brutalisation of a stolid nature like "the Whelp's." When Gradgrind's son is about to be shipped abroad out of reach of the penalties of his crime, he reminds his father that he merely exemplifies the statistical law that "so many people out of so many will be dishonest." When the virtuous Bitzer is indignantly asked whether he has a heart, he replies that he is physiologically assured of the fact; and to the further inquiry whether this heart of his is accessible to compassion, makes answer that "it is accessible to reason, and to nothing else." These returnings of Mr. Gradgrind's philosophy upon himself savour of the moral justice represented by Gratiano in the fourth act. So again, Coketown with its tall chimneys and black river, and its thirteen religious denominations, to which whoever else belonged the working men did *not*, is no perverse contradiction of fact. But the influence of Coketown, or of a whole wilderness of Coketowns, cannot justly be charged with a tendency to ripen such a product as Josiah Bounderby, who is not only the "bully of humanity," but proves to be a mean-spirited impostor in his pretensions to the glory of self-help. In short, *Hard Times* errs by its attempt to prove too much.

Apart, however, from the didactic purposes which overburden it, the pathos and humour of particular portions of this tale appear to me to have been in nowise overrated. The domestic tragedy of Stephen and Rachael has a subdued intensity of tenderness and melancholy of a kind rare with Dickens, upon whom the example of Mrs. Gaskell in this instance may not have been without

its influence. Nor is there anything more delicately and at the same time more appropriately conceived in any of his works, than poor Rachael's dominion over the imagination as well as over the affections of her noble-minded and unfortunate lover: "as the shining stars were to the heavy candle in the window, so was Rachael, in the rugged fancy of this man, to the common experiences of his life." The love-story of poor Louisa is of a different kind, and more wordy in the telling; yet here also the feelings painted are natural and true. The humorous interest is almost entirely concentrated upon the company of horse-riders; and never has Dickens' extraordinary power of humorous observation more genially asserted itself. From Mr. Sleary—"thtout man, game-eye"—and his protagonist, Mr. E. W. B. Childers, who, when he shook his long hair, caused it to "shake all at once," down to Master Kidderminster, who used to form the apex of the human pyramids, and "in whose young nature there was an original flavour of the misanthrope," these honest equestrians are more than worthy to stand by the side of Mr. Vincent Crummles and his company of actors; and the fun has here, in addition to the grotesqueness of the earlier picture, a mellowness of its own. Dickens' comic genius was never so much at its ease and so inexhaustible in ludicrous fancies, as in the depiction of such groups as this; and the horse-riders, skilfully introduced to illustrate a truth, wholesome if not novel, would have insured popularity so a far less interesting, and to a far less powerful fiction.

The year after that which saw the publication of *Hard Times* was one in which the thoughts of most Englishmen were turned away from the problems approached in that story. But if the military glories of 1854 had not aroused

in him any very exuberant enthusiasm, the reports from the Crimea in the ensuing winter were more likely to appeal to his patriotism as well as to his innate impatience of disorder and incompetence. In the first instance, however, he contented himself with those grumblings to which, as a sworn foe of red tape and a declared disbeliever in our Parliamentary system, he might claim to have a special right; and he seems to have been too restless in and about himself to have entered very closely into the progress of public affairs. The Christmas had been a merry one at Tavistock House; and the amateur theatricals of its juvenile company had passed through a most successful season. Their history has been written by one of the performers—himself not the least distinguished of the company, since it was he who, in Dickens' house, caused Thackeray to roll off his seat in a fit of laughter. Dickens, who with Mark Lemon disported himself among these precocious minnows, was, as our chronicler relates, like Triplet, "author, manager, and actor too," organiser, deviser, and harmoniser of all the incongruous assembled elements; it was he "who improvised costumes, painted and corked our innocent cheeks, and suggested all the most effective business of the scene." But as was usual with him, the transition was rapid from play to something very like earnest; and already in June, 1855, the Tavistock House theatre produced Mr. Wilkie Collins' melodrama of *The Lighthouse*, which afterwards found its way to the public stage. To Dickens, who performed in it with the author, it afforded "scope for a piece of acting of great power," the old sailor Aaron Gurnock, which by its savage picturesqueness earned a tribute of recognition from Carlyle. No less a hand than Stanfield painted the scenery, and Dickens himself, besides

writing the prologue, introduced into the piece a ballad called *The Story of the Wreck*, a not unsuccessful effort in Cowper's manner. At Christmas, 1856–57, there followed *The Frozen Deep*, another melodrama by the same author; and by this time the management of his private theatricals had become to Dickens a serious business to be carried on seriously for its own sake. "It was to him," he wrote, "like writing a book in company;" and his young people might learn from it "that kind of humility which is got from the earned knowledge that whatever the right hand finds to do must be done with the heart in it, and in a desperate earnest." *The Frozen Deep* was several times repeated, on one occasion for the benefit of the daughter of the recently deceased Douglas Jerrold; but by the end of January the little theatre was finally broken up; and though Dickens spent one more winter season at Tavistock House, the shadow was then already falling upon his cheerful home.

In the midst of his children's Christmas gaieties of the year 1855, Dickens had given two or three public readings to "wonderful audiences" in various parts of the country. A trip to Paris with Mr. Wilkie Collins had followed, during which, as he wrote home, he was wandering about Paris all day, dining at all manner of places, and frequenting the theatres at the rate of two or three a-night. "I suppose," he adds, with pleasant self-irony, "as an old farmer said of Scott, I am 'makin' mysel'' all the time; but I seem to be rather a free-and-easy sort of superior vagabond." And in truth a roving restless spirit was strong upon him in these years. Already, in April, he speaks of himself as "going off; I don't know where or how far, to ponder about I don't know what." France, Switzerland, Spain, Constantinople, in Mr. Layard's com-

pany had been successively in his thoughts, and for aught he knew, Greenland and the North Pole might occur to him next. At the same time he foresaw that the end of it all would be his shutting himself up in some out-of-the-way place of which he had not yet thought, and going desperately to work there.

Before, however, these phantasmagoric schemes had subsided into the quiet plan of an autumn visit to Folkestone, followed during the winter and spring by a residence at Paris, he had at least found a subject to ponder on, which was to suggest an altogether novel element in his next work of fiction. I have said that though like the majority of his fellow-countrymen, Dickens regarded our war with Russia as inevitable, yet his hatred of all war, and his impatience of the exaggerations of passion and sentiment which all war produces, had preserved him from himself falling a victim to their contagion. On the other hand, when in the winter of 1854–55 the note of exultation in the bravery of our soldiers in the Crimea began to be intermingled with complaints against the grievously defective arrangements for their comfort and health, and when these complaints, stimulated by the loud-voiced energy of the press, and extending into censures upon the whole antiquated and perverse system of our army administration, speedily swelled into a roar of popular indignation, sincere conviction ranged him on the side of the most uncompromising malcontents. He was at all times ready to give vent to that antipathy against officialism which is shared by so large a number of Englishmen. Though the son of a dockyard official, he is found roundly asserting that "more obstruction of good things and patronage of bad things has been committed in the dockyards—as in everything connected with the mis-

direction of the navy—than in every other branch of the public service put together, including"—the particularisation is hard—"even the Woods and Forests." He had listened, we may be sure, to the scornful denunciations launched by the prophet of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* against Downing Street and all its works, and to the proclamation of the great though rather vague truth that "reform in that Downing Street department of affairs is precisely the reform which were worth all others." And now the heartrending sufferings of multitudes of brave men had brought to light, in one department of the public administration, a series of complications and perversities which in the end became so patent to the Government itself, that they had to be roughly remedied in the very midst of the struggle. The cry for administrative reform, which arose in the year 1855, however crude the form it frequently took, was in itself a logical enough result of the situation; and there is no doubt that the angriness of the complaint was intensified by the attitude taken up in the House of Commons by the head of the Government towards the pertinacious politician who made himself the mouthpiece of the extreme demands of the feeling outside. Mr. Layard was Dickens' valued friend; and the share is thus easily explained, which—against his otherwise uniform practice of abstaining from public meetings—the most popular writer of the day took in the Administrative Reform meetings, held in Drury Lane Theatre, on June 27th, 1855. The speech which he delivered on this occasion, and which was intended to aid in forcing the "whole question" of Administrative Reform upon the attention of an unwilling Government, possesses no value whatever in connexion with its theme, though of course it is not devoid of some smart and telling hits. Not on

the platform, but at his desk as an author, was Dickens to do real service to the cause of administrative efficiency. For while invective of a general kind runs off like water from the rock of usage, even Circumlocution Offices are not insensible to the acetous force of satire.

Dickens' caricature of British officialism formed the most generally attractive element in the story of *Little Dorrit*—originally intended to be called *Nobody's Fault*—which he published in monthly numbers, from December, 1855, to June, 1857. He was solemnly taken to task for his audacity by the *Edinburgh Review*, which reproached him for his persistent ridicule of "the institutions of the country, the laws, the administration, in a word, the government under which we live." His "charges" were treated as hardly seriously meant, but as worthy of severe reprobation because likely to be seriously taken by the poor, the uneducated, and the young. And the caricaturist, besides being reminded of the names of several eminent public servants, was specially requested to look, as upon a picture contrasting with his imaginary Circumlocution Office, upon the Post Office, or, for the choice offered was not more extensive, upon the London police so liberally praised by himself in his own journal. The delighted author of *Little Dorrit* replied to this not very skilful diatribe in a short and spirited rejoinder in *Household Words*. In this he judiciously confined himself to refuting an unfounded incidental accusation in the Edinburgh article, and to dwelling, as upon a "Curious Misprint," upon the indignant query: "How does he account for the career of *Mr. Rowland Hill?*" whose name, as an example of the ready intelligence of the Circumlocution Office, was certainly an odd *erratum*. Had he, however, cared to

make a more general reply to the main article of the indictment, he might have pointed out that, as a matter of fact, our official administrative machinery *had* recently broken down in one of its most important branches, and that circumlocution in the literal sense of the word—circumlocution between department and department, or office and office—had been one of the principal causes of the collapse. The general drift of the satire was therefore, in accordance with fact, and the satire itself salutary in its character. To quarrel with it for not taking into consideration what might be said on the other side, was to quarrel with the method of treatment which satire has at all times considered itself entitled to adopt; while to stigmatise a popular book as likely to mislead the ill-informed, was to suggest a restraint which would have deprived wit and humour of most of their opportunities of rendering service to either a good or an evil cause.

A far more legitimate exception has been taken to these Circumlocution Office episodes as defective in art by the very reason of their being exaggerations. Those best acquainted with the interiors of our government offices may be right in denying that the Barnacles can be regarded as an existing type. Indeed, it would at no time have been easy to point to any office quite as labyrinthine, or quite as bottomless, as that permanently presided over by Mr. Tite Barnacle; to any chief secretary or commissioner so absolutely wooden of fibre as he; or to any private secretary so completely absorbed in his eyeglass as Barnacle junior. But as satirical figures they one and all fulfil their purpose, as thoroughly as the picture of the official sanctum itself with its furniture "in the higher official manner," and its "general bam-

boozling air of how not to do it." The only question is, whether satire which, if it is to be effective, must be of a piece and in its way exaggerated, is not out of place in a pathetic and humorous fiction, where, like a patch of too diverse a thread, it interferes with the texture into which it is introduced. In themselves these passages of *Little Dorrit* deserve to remain unforgotten among the masterpieces of literary caricature; and there is, I do not hesitate to say, something of Swiftian force in their grotesque embodiment of a popular current of indignation. The mere name of the Circumlocution Office was a stroke of genius, one of those phrases of Dickens which Professor Masson justly describes as, whether exaggerated or not, "efficacious for social reform." As usual, Dickens had made himself well acquainted with the formal or outside part of his subject; the very air of Whitehall seems to gather round us as Mr. Tite Barnacle, in answer to a persistent inquirer who "wants to know" the position of a particular matter, concedes that it "may have been, in the course of official business, referred to the Circumlocution Office for its consideration," and that "the department may have either originated, or confirmed, a minute on the subject." In the *Household Words* paper, called *A Poor Man's Tale of a Patent* (1850), will be found a sufficiently elaborate study for Mr. Doyce's experiences of the government of his country, as wrathfully narrated by Mr. Meagles.

With the exception of the Circumlocution Office passages, —adventitious as they are to the progress of the action, *Little Dorrit* exhibits a palpable falling-off in inventive power. Forster illustrates by a striking facsimile the difference between the "labour and pains" of the author's short notes for *Little Dorrit* and the "lightness and confidence

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could not have become what he is to the great multitude of his readers had he, as a humorist, often indulged in this cynical mood.

There is in general little in the characters of this fiction to compensate for the sense of oppression from which, as he follows the slow course of its far from striking plot, the reader finds it difficult to free himself. A vein of genuine humour shows itself in Mr. Plornish, obviously a favourite of the author's, and one of those genuine working men, as rare in fiction as on the stage, where Mr. Toole has reproduced the species; but the relation between Mr. and Mrs. Plornish is only a fainter revival of that between Mr. and Mrs. Bagnet. Nor is there anything fresh or novel in the characters belonging to another social sphere. Henry Gowan, apparently intended as an elaborate study in psychology, is only a very tedious one; and his mother at Hampton Court, whatever phase of a dilapidated aristocracy she may be intended to caricature, is merely illbred. As for Mrs. General, she is so sorry a burlesque that she could not be reproduced without extreme caution even on the stage—to the reckless conventionalities of which, indeed, the whole picture of the Dorrit family as *nouveaux riches* bears a striking resemblance. There is, on the contrary, some good caricature, which, in one instance at least, was thought transparent by the knowing, in the *silhouettes* of the great Mr. Merdle's professional guests; but these are, like the Circumlocution Office puppets, satiric sketches, not the living figures of creative humour.

I have spoken of this story with a censure which may be regarded as exaggerated in its turn. But I well remember, at the time of its publication in numbers, the general consciousness that *Little Dorrit* was proving unequal to the

high-strung expectations which a new work by Dickens then excited in his admirers both young and old. There were new and striking features in it, with abundant comic and serious effect, but there was no power in the whole story to seize and hold, and the feeling could not be escaped that the author was not at his best. And Dickens was not at his best when he wrote *Little Dorrit*. Yet while nothing is more remarkable in the literary career of Dickens than this apparently speedy decline of his power, nothing is more wonderful in it than the degree to which he righted himself again, not, indeed, with his public, for the public never deserted its favourite, but with his genius.

A considerable part of *Little Dorrit* must have been written in Paris; where, in October, after a quiet autumn at Folkestone, Dickens had taken a family apartment in the Avenue des Champs Élysées, "about half a quarter of a mile above Franconi's." Here, after his fashion, he lived much to himself, his family and his guests, only occasionally finding his way into a literary or artistic *salon*; but he sat for his portrait to both Ary and Henri Scheffer, and was easily persuaded to read his *Cricket on the Hearth* to an audience in the atelier. Macready and Mr. Wilkie Collins were in turn the companions of many "theatrical and lounging" evenings. Intent as Dickens now had become upon the technicalities of his own form of composition, this interest must have been greatly stimulated by the frequent comparison of modern French plays, in most of which nicety of construction and effectiveness of situation have so paramount a significance. At Boulogne, too, Mr. Wilkie Collins was a welcome summer visitor. And in the autumn the two friends started on the *Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*. It came to an untimely end as a pedestrian excursion, but the record of

it is one of the pleasantest memorials of a friendship which brightened much of Dickens' life and intensified his activity in work as well as in pleasure.

"Mr. Thomas Idle" had indeed a busy time of it in this year 1857. The publication of *Little Dorrit* was not finished till June, and in August we find him, between a reading and a performance of *The Frozen Deep* at Manchester—then in the exciting days of the great Art Exhibition—thus describing to Macready his way of filling up his time: "I hope you have seen my tussle with the *Edinburgh*. I saw the chance last Friday week, as I was going down to read the *Carol* in St. Martin's Hall. Instantly turned to, then and there, and wrote half the article, flew out of bed early next morning, and finished it by noon. Went down to Gallery of Illustration (we acted that night), did the day's business, corrected the proofs in Polar costume in dressing-room, broke up two numbers of *Household Words* to get it out directly, played in *Frozen Deep* and *Uncle John*, presided at supper of company, made no end of speeches, went home and gave in completely for four hours, then got sound asleep, and next day was as fresh as you used to be in the far-off days of your lusty youth." It was on the occasion of the readings at St. Martin's Hall, for the benefit of Douglas Jerrold's family, that the thought of giving readings for his own benefit first suggested itself to Dickens; and, as will be seen, by April, 1858, the idea had been carried into execution, and a new phase of life had begun for him. And yet at this very time, when his home was about to cease being in the fullest sense a home to Dickens, by a strange irony of fortune, he had been enabled to carry out a long-cherished fancy and to take possession, in the first instance as a summer residence, of the house on Gad's Hill, of which a lucky chance had

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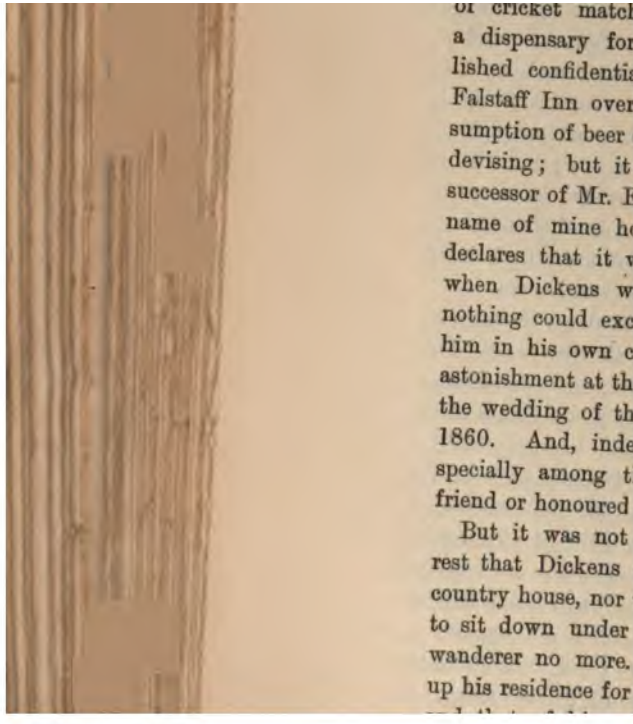
homely look, free from the slightest affectation of quietness, belonged to Gad's Hill Place, even after all these alterations, and belongs to it even at this day, when Dickens' solid old-fashioned furniture has been changed. In the pretty little front hall still hangs the illuminated tablet recalling the legend of Gad's Hill; and on the inside panels of the library door remain the facetious sham book-titles: "Hudson's *Complete Failure*," and "*Ten Minutes in China*," and "Cats' *Lives*," and, on a long series of leather backs, "Hansard's *Guide to Refreshing Sleep*." The rooms are all of a modest size, and the bedrooms—among them Dickens' own—very low; but the whole house looks thoroughly habitable, while the views across the cornfields at the back are such as in their undulation of soft outline are nowhere more pleasant than in Kent. Rochester and the Medway are near, even for those who do not—like Dickens and his dogs—count a stretch past three or four "milestones on the Dover road" as the mere beginning of an afternoon's walk. At a distance little greater there are in one direction the green glades of Cobham Park, with Chalk and Gravesend beyond; and in another the flat country towards the Thames, with its abundance of market-gardens. There, too, are the marshes on the border of which lie the massive ruin of Cooling Castle, the refuge of the Lollard martyr who was *not* concerned in the affair on Gad's Hill, and Cooling Church and churchyard, with the quaint little gravestones in the grass. London and the office were within easy reach, and Paris itself was, for practical purposes, not much farther away, so that, in later days at all events, Dickens found himself "crossing the Channel perpetually."

The name of Dickens still has a good sound in and about Gad's Hill. He was on very friendly terms with



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ment, Mrs. Dickens left her husband, who henceforth allowed her an ample separate maintenance, and occasionally corresponded with her, but never saw her again. The younger children remained in their father's house under the self-sacrificing and devoted care of Mrs. Dickens' surviving sister, Miss Hogarth. Shortly afterwards, Dickens thought it well, in printed words which may be left forgotten, to rebut some slanderous gossip which, as the way of the world is, had misrepresented the circumstances of this separation. The causes of the event were an open secret to his friends and acquaintances. If he had ever loved his wife with that affection before which so-called incompatibilities of habits, temper, or disposition fade into nothingness, there is no indication of it in any of his numerous letters addressed to her. Neither has it ever been pretended that he strove in the direction of that resignation which love and duty together made possible to David Copperfield, or even that he remained in every way master of himself, as many men have known how to remain, the story of whose wedded life and its disappointments has never been written in history or figured in fiction. It was not incumbent upon his faithful friend and biographer, and much less can it be upon one whom nothing but a sincere admiration of Dickens' genius entitles to speak of him at all, to declare the standard by which the most painful transaction in his life is to be judged. I say the most painful, for it is with a feeling akin to satisfaction that one reads, in a letter three years afterwards to a lady in reference to her daughter's wedding: "I want to thank you also for thinking of me on the occasion, but I feel that I am better away from it. I should really have a misgiving that I was a sort of a shadow on a young marriage, and you will understand

me when I say so, and no more." A shadow too—who would deny it?—falls on every one of the pictures in which the tenderest of modern humorists has painted the simple joys and the sacred sorrows of that home life of which to his generation he had become almost the poet and the prophet, when we remember how he was himself neither blessed with its full happiness nor capable of accepting with resignation the imperfection inherent in it, as in all things human.

CHAPTER VI.

LAST YEARS.

1858—1870.

THE last twelve years of Dickens' life were busy years like the others; but his activity was no longer merely the expression of exuberant force, and long before the collapse came he had been repeatedly warned of the risks he continued to defy. When, however, he first entered upon those public readings, by persisting in which he indisputably hastened his end, neither he nor his friends took into account the fear of bodily ill-effects resulting from his exertions. Their misgivings had other grounds. Of course, had there been any pressure of pecuniary difficulty or need upon Dickens when he began, or when, on successive occasions he resumed, his public readings, there would be nothing further to be said. But I see no suggestion of any such pressure. "My worldly circumstances," he wrote before he had finally made up his mind to read in America, "are very good. I don't want money. All my possessions are free and in the best order. Still," he added, "at fifty-five or fifty-six, the likelihood of making a very great addition to one's capital in half a year is an immense consideration." Moreover, with all his love of doing as he chose, and his sense of the value of such freedom to him as a writer, he was a man of simple though liberal habits of life, with no taste for the gorgeous or

capricious extravagances of a Balzac or a Dumas, nor can he have been at a loss how to make due provision for those whom in the course of nature he would leave behind him. Love of money for its own sake, or for that of the futilities it can purchase, was altogether foreign to his nature. At the same time, the rapid making of large sums has potent attractions for most men; and these attractions are perhaps strongest for those who engage in the pursuit for the sake of the race as well as of the prize. Dickens' readings were virtually something new; their success was not only all his own, but unique and unprecedented, what nobody but himself ever had achieved or ever could have achieved. Yet the determining motive—if I read his nature rightly—was after all of another kind. "Two souls dwelt in his breast;" and when their aspirations united in one appeal it was irresistible. The author who craved for the visible signs of a sympathy responding to that which he felt for his multitudes of readers, and the actor who longed to impersonate creations already beings of flesh and blood to himself, were both astir in him, and in both capacities he felt himself drawn into the very publicity deprecated by his friends. He liked, as one who knew him thoroughly said to me, to be face to face with his public; and against this liking, which he had already indulged as fully as he could without passing the boundaries between private and professional life, arguments were in vain. It has been declared sheer pedantry to speak of such boundaries; and to suggest that there is anything degrading in paid readings such as those of Dickens would, on the face of it, be absurd. On the other hand, the author who, on or off the stage, becomes the interpreter of his writings to large audiences, more especially if he does his best to stereotype his interpretation

by constantly repeating it, limits his own prerogative of being many things to many men; and where the author of a work, more particularly of a work of fiction, adjusts it to circumstances differing from those of its production, he allows the requirements of the lesser art to prejudice the claims of the greater.

Dickens cannot have been blind to these considerations; but to others his eyes were never opened. He found much that was inspiriting in his success as a reader, and this not only in the large sums he gained, or even in the "roaring sea of response," to use his own fine metaphor, of which he had become accustomed to "stand upon the beach." His truest sentiment as an author was touched to the quick; and he was, as he says himself, "brought very near to what he had sometimes dreamed might be his fame," when at York, a lady, whose face he had never seen, stopped him in the street, and said to him: "Mr. Dickens, will you let me touch the hand that has filled my house with many friends?" or when at Belfast, he was almost overwhelmed with entreaties "to shake hands, Misther Dickens, and God bless you, sir; not ounly for the light you've been to me this night, but for the light you've been in mee house, sir—and God love your face!—this many a year." On the other hand—and this, perhaps, a nature like his would not be the quickest to perceive—there was something vulgarising in the constant striving after immediate success, in the shape of large audiences, loud applause, and satisfactory receipts. The conditions of the actor's art cannot forego these stimulants; and this is precisely his disadvantage in comparison with artists who are able to possess themselves in quiet. To me, at least, it is painful to find Dickens jubilantly recording how at

Dublin "eleven bank-notes were thrust into the pay-box —Arthur saw them—at one time for eleven stalls;" how at Edinburgh, "neither Grisi, nor Jenny Lind, nor anything, nor anybody, seems to make the least effect on the draw of the readings;" while, every allowance being made, there is something almost ludicrous in the double assertion, that "the most delicate audience I had ever seen in any provincial place is Canterbury; but the audience with the greatest sense of humour, certainly is Dover." What subjects for parody Dickens would have found in these innocent ecstasies if uttered by any other man! Undoubtedly, this enthusiasm was closely connected with the very thoroughness with which he entered into the work of his readings. "You have no idea," he tells Forster, in 1867, "how I have worked at them. Finding it necessary, as their reputation widened, that they should be better than at first, *I have learnt them all*, so as to have no mechanical drawback in looking after the words. I have tested all the serious passion in them by everything I know; made the humorous points much more humorous; corrected my utterance of certain words; cultivated a self-possession not to be disturbed; and made myself master of the situation." "From ten years ago to last night," he writes to his son from Baltimore in 1868, "I have never read to an audience but I have watched for an opportunity of striking out something better somewhere." The freshness with which he returned night after night and season after season, to the sphere of his previous successes, was itself a genuine actor's gift; "so real," he declares, "are my fictions to myself, that, after hundreds of nights, I come with a feeling of perfect freshness to that little red table, and laugh and cry with my hearers as if I had never stood there before."

Dickens' first public readings were given at Birmingham, during the Christmas week of 1853–54, in support of the new Midland Institute; but a record—for the authenticity of which I cannot vouch—remains, that with true theatrical instinct he, before the Christmas in question, gave a trial reading of the *Christmas Carol* to a smaller public audience at Peterborough. He had since been repeatedly found willing to read for benevolent purposes; and the very fact that it had become necessary to decline some of these frequent invitations, had again suggested the possibility—which had occurred to him eleven years before—of meeting the demand in a different way. Yet it may, after all, be doubted whether the idea of undertaking an entire series of paid public readings would have been carried out, had it not been for the general restlessness which had seized upon Dickens early in 1858, when, moreover, he had no special task either of labour or of leisure to absorb him, and when he craved for excitement more than ever. To go home —in this springtime of 1858—was not to find there the peace of contentment. "I must do *something*," he wrote in March to his faithful counsellor, "or I shall wear my heart away. I can see no better thing to do that is half so hopeful in itself, or half so well suited to my restless state."

So by April the die was cast, and on the 29th of that month he had entered into his new relation with the public. One of the strongest and most genuine impulses of his nature had victoriously asserted itself, and according to his wont he addressed himself to his task with a relentless vigour which flinched from no exertion. He began with a brief series at St. Martin's Hall, and then, his invaluable friend Arthur Smith continuing to act as his manager,

he contrived to cram not less than eighty-seven readings into three months and a half of travelling in the "provinces," including Scotland and Ireland. A few winter readings in London, and a short supplementary course in the country during October, 1859, completed this first series. Already, in 1858, we find him, in a letter from Ireland, complaining of the "tremendous strain," and declaring, "I seem to be always either in a railway carriage, or reading, or going to bed. I get so knocked up, whenever I have a minute to remember it, that then I go to bed as a matter of course." But the enthusiasm which everywhere welcomed him—I can testify to the thrill of excitement produced by his visit to Cambridge, in October, 1859—repaid him for his fatigues. Scotland thawed to him, and with Dublin—where his success was extraordinary—he was so smitten, as to think it at first sight "pretty nigh as big as Paris." In return, the Boots at Morrison's expressed the general feeling in a patriotic point of view: "Whaat sart of a hoose, sur?" he asked me. "Capital." "The Lard be praised, for the 'onor o' Dooblin!"

The books, or portions of books, to which he confined himself during this first series of readings, were few in number. They comprised the *Carol* and the *Chimes*, and two stories from earlier Christmas numbers of *Household Words*—may the exclamation of the soft-hearted chambermaid at the Holly Tree Inn, "It's a shame to part 'em!" never vanish from my memory!—together with the episodic readings of the *Trial* in *Pickwick*, *Mrs. Gamp*, and *Paul Dombey*. Of these the *Pickwick*, which I heard more than once, is still vividly present to me. The only drawback to the complete enjoyment of it was the lurking fear that there had been some tampering with the text, not to be condoned even in its author. But in the way of

assumption, Charles Mathews the elder himself could have accomplished no more Protean effort. The lack-lustre eye of Mr. Justice Stareleigh, the forensic hitch of Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz, and the hopeless impotence of Mr. Nathaniel Winkle, were alike incomparable. And if the success of the impersonation of Mr. Samuel Weller was less complete—although Dickens had formerly acted the character on an amateur stage—the reason probably was that, by reason of his endless store of ancient and modern instances, Sam had himself become a quasi-mythical being, whom it was almost painful to find reproduced in flesh and blood.

I have not hesitated to treat these readings by Dickens as if they had been the performances of an actor; and the description would apply even more strongly to his later readings, in which he seemed to make his points in a more accentuated fashion than before. "His readings," says Mr. C. Kent, in an interesting little book about them, "were, in the fullest meaning of the words, singularly ingenious and highly-elaborated histrionic performances." As such, they had been prepared with a care such as few actors bestow upon their parts, and—for the book was prepared not less than the reading—not all authors bestow upon their plays. Now the art of reading, even in the case of dramatic works, has its own laws, which even the most brilliant readers cannot neglect except at their peril. A proper pitch has to be found in the first instance, before the exceptional passages can be, as it were, marked off from it; and the absence of this groundtone sometimes interfered with the total effect of a reading by Dickens. On the other hand, the exceptional passages were, if not uniformly, at least generally excellent; nor am I at all disposed to agree with Forster in preferring, as a rule, the humorous

to the pathetic. At the same time, there was noticeable in these readings a certain hardness which competent critics likewise discerned in Dickens' acting, and which could not, at least in the former case, be regarded as an ordinary characteristic of dilettanteism. The truth is that he isolated his parts too sharply—a frequent fault of English acting, and one more detrimental to the total effect of a reading than even to that of an acted play.

No sooner had the heaviest stress of the first series of readings ceased, than Dickens was once more at work upon a new fiction. The more immediate purpose was to ensure a prosperous launch to the journal which, in the spring of 1859, took the place of *Household Words*. A dispute, painful in its origin, but ending in an amicable issue, had resulted in the purchase of that journal by Dickens; but already a little earlier, he had—as he was entitled to do—begun the new venture of *All the Year Round*, with which *Household Words* was afterwards incorporated. The first number, published on April 30th, contained the earliest instalment of *A Tale of Two Cities*, which was completed by November 20th following.

This story holds a unique place among the fictions of its author. Perhaps the most striking difference between it and his other novels may seem to lie in the all but entire absence from it of any humour or attempt at humour; for neither the brutalities of that "honest tradesman," Jerry, nor the laconisms of Miss Pross, can well be called by that name. Not that his sources of humour were drying up, even though, about this time, he contributed to an American journal a short "romance of the real world," *Hunted Down*, from which the same relief is again conspicuously absent. For the humour of Dickens was to assert itself with unmistakeable force

in his next longer fiction, and was even before that, in some of his occasional papers, to give delightful proofs of its continued vigour. In the case of the *Tale of Two Cities*, he had a new and distinct design in his mind which did not indeed exclude humour, but with which a liberal indulgence in it must have seriously interfered. "I set myself," he writes, "the little task of writing a picturesque story, rising in every chapter with characters true to nature, but whom the story itself should express more than they should express themselves by dialogue. I mean, in other words, that I fancied a story of incident might be written, in place of the bestiality that is written under that pretence, pounding the characters out in its own mortar, and beating their own interests out of them." He therefore renounced his more usual method in favour of one probably less congenial to him. Yet, in his own opinion at least, he succeeded so well in the undertaking, that when the story was near its end, he could venture to express a hope that it was "the best story he had written." So much praise will hardly be given to this novel even by admirers of the French art of telling a story succinctly, or by those who can never resist a rather hysterical treatment of the French Revolution.

In my own opinion, *A Tale of Two Cities* is a skilfully though not perfectly constructed novel, which needed but little substantial alteration in order to be converted into a not less effective stage-play. And with such a design, Dickens actually sent the proof-sheets of the book to his friend Regnier, in the fearful hope that he might approve of the project of its dramatisation for a French theatre. Cleverly or clumsily adapted, the tale of the Revolution and its sanguinary vengeance was unlikely to commend itself to the Imperial censorship; but an English version

was, I believe, afterwards very fairly successful on the boards of the Adelphi, where Madame Celeste was certainly in her right place as Madame Defarge, an excellent character for a melodrama, though rather wearisome as she lies in wait through half a novel.

The construction of this story is, as I have said, skilful but not perfect. Dickens himself successfully defended his use of accident in bringing about the death of Madame Defarge; the real objection to the conduct of this episode, however, lies in the inadequacy of the contrivance for leaving Miss Pross behind in Paris. Too much is also, I think, made to turn upon the three words "and their descendants"—non-essential in the original connexion—by which Dr. Manette's written denunciation becomes fatal to those he loves. Still, the general edifice of the plot is solid; its interest is, notwithstanding the crowded background, concentrated with much skill upon a small group of personages; and Carton's self-sacrifice, admirably prepared from the very first, produces a legitimate tragic effect. At the same time, the novelist's art vindicates its own claims. Not only does this story contain several narrative episodes of remarkable power—such as the flight from Paris at the close, and the touching little incident of the seamstress, told in Dickens' sweetest pathetic manner—but it is likewise enriched by some descriptive pictures of unusual excellence: for instance, the sketch of Dover in the good old smuggling times, and the mezzotint of the stormy evening in Soho. Doubtless the increased mannerism of the style is disturbing, and this not only in the high-strung French scenes. As to the historical element in this novel, Dickens modestly avowed his wish that he might by his story have been able "to add something to the popular and

picturesque means of understanding that terrible time, though no one can hope to add anything to Mr. Carlyle's wonderful book." But if Dickens desired to depict the noble of the *ancien régime*, either according to Carlyle or according to intrinsic probability, he should not have offered, in his Marquis, a type historically questionable, and unnatural besides. The description of the Saint Antoine, before and during the bursting of the storm, has in it more of truthfulness, or of the semblance of truthfulness; and Dickens' perception of the physiognomy of the French workman is, I think, remarkably accurate. Altogether, the book is an extraordinary *tour de force*, which Dickens never repeated.

The opening of a new story by Dickens gave the necessary *impetus* to his new journal at its earliest stage; nor was the ground thus gained ever lost. Mr. W. H. Wills stood by his chief's side as of old, taking, more especially in later years, no small share of responsibility upon him. The prospectus of *All the Year Round* had not in vain promised an identity of principle in its conduct with that of its predecessor; in energy and spirit it showed no falling off; and, though not in all respects, the personality of Dickens made itself felt as distinctly as ever. Besides the *Tale of Two Cities*, he contributed to it his story of *Great Expectations*. Among his contributors, Mr. Wilkie Collins took away the breath of multitudes of readers; Mr. Charles Reade disported himself among the facts which gave stamina to his fiction; and Lord Lytton made a daring voyage into a mysterious country. Thither Dickens followed him, for once, in his *Four Stories*, not otherwise noteworthy, and written in a manner already difficult to discriminate from that of Mr. Wilkie Collins. For the rest, the advice with which Dickens aided Lord

Lytton's progress in his *Strange Story* was neither more ready nor more painstaking than that which he bestowed upon his younger contributors, to more than one of whom he generously gave the opportunity of publishing in his journal a long work of fiction. Some of these younger writers were at this period among his most frequent guests and associates; for nothing more naturally commended itself to him than the encouragement of the younger generation.

But though longer imaginative works played at least as conspicuous a part in the new journal as they had in the old, the conductor likewise continued to make manifest his intention that the lesser contributions should not be treated by readers or by writers as harmless necessary "padding." For this purpose it was requisite not only that the choice of subjects should be made with the utmost care, but also that the master's hand should itself be occasionally visible. Dickens' occasional contributions had been few and unimportant, till in a happy hour he began a series of papers, including many of the pleasantest, as well as of the mellowest, among the lighter productions of his pen. As usual, he had taken care to find for this series a name which of itself went far to make its fortune.

> I am both a town and a country traveller, and am always on the road. Figuratively speaking, I travel for the great house of Human Interest Brothers, and have rather a large connexion in the fancy goods way. Literally speaking, I am always wandering here and there from my rooms in Covent Garden, London—now about the city streets, now about the country byroads, seeing many little things and some great things, which, because they interest me, I think may interest others.

The whole collection of these *Uncommercial Traveller*

papers, together with the *Uncommercial Samples* which succeeded them after Dickens' return from America, and which begin with a graphic account of his homeward voyage *Aboard Ship*, where the voice of conscience spoke in the motion of the screw, amounts to thirty-seven articles, and spreads over a period of nine years. They are necessarily of varying merit, but among them are some which deserve a permanent place in our lighter literature. Such are the description of the churchyards on a quiet evening in *The City of the Absent*, the grotesque picture of loneliness in *Chambers*—a favourite theme with Dickens—and the admirable papers on *Shy Neighbourhoods* and on *Tramps*. Others have a biographical interest, though delightfully objective in treatment; yet others are mere fugitive pieces; but there are few without some of the most attractive qualities of Dickens' easiest style.

Dickens contributed other occasional papers to his journal, some of which may be forgotten without injury to his fame. Among these may be reckoned the rather dreary *George Silverman's Explanation* (1868), in which there is nothing characteristic but a vivid picture of a set of ranters, led by a clique of scoundrels; on the other hand, there will always be admirers of the pretty *Holiday Romance*, published nearly simultaneously in America and England, a nosegay of tales told by children, the only fault of which is that, as with other children's nosegays, there is perhaps a little too much of it. I have no room for helping to rescue from partial oblivion an old friend, whose portrait has not, I think, found a home among his master's collected sketches. Pincher's counterfeit has gone astray like *Pincher* himself. Meanwhile, the special institution of the Christmas Number flourished in connexion with *All the Year*

Round down to the year 1867, as it had during the last five years of *Household Words*. It consisted, with the exception of the very last number, of a series of short stories, in a framework of the editor's own devising. To the authors of the stories, of which he invariably himself wrote one or more, he left the utmost liberty, at times stipulating for nothing but that tone of cheerful philanthropy which he had domesticated in his journal. In the Christmas Numbers, which gradually attained to such a popularity that of one of the last something like a quarter of a million copies were sold, Dickens himself shone most conspicuously in the introductory sections; and some of these are to be reckoned among his very best descriptive character-sketches. Already in *Household Words* Christmas Numbers the introductory sketch of the *Seven Poor Travellers* from Watts's charity at supper in the Rochester hostelry, and the excellent description of a winter journey and sojourn at the *Holly Tree Inn*, with an excursus on inns in general, had become widely popular; the *All the Year Round* Numbers, however, largely augmented this success. After *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, with the adventures of Miss Kitty Kimmeens, a pretty little morality in miniature, teaching the same lesson as the vagaries of Mr. Mopes the hermit, came *Somebody's Luggage*, with its exhaustive disquisition on waiters; and then the memorable chirpings of *Mrs. Lirriper*, in both *Lodgings* and *Legacy*, admirable in the delicacy of their pathos, and including an inimitable picture of London lodging-house life. Then followed the *Prescriptions* of *Dr. Marigold*, the eloquent and sarcastic but tender-hearted Cheap Jack; and *Mugby Junction*, which gave words to the cry of a whole nation of hungry and thirsty travellers. In the tales and sketches con-

tributed by him to the Christmas Numbers, in addition to these introductions, he at times gave the rein to his love for the fanciful and the grotesque, which there was here no reason to keep under. On the whole, written as in a sense these compositions were to order, nothing is more astonishing in them than his continued freshness, against which his mannerism is here of vanishing importance; and, inasmuch as after issuing a last Christmas Number of a different kind, Dickens abandoned the custom when it had reached the height of popular favour, and when manifold imitations had offered him the homage of their flattery, he may be said to have withdrawn from this campaign in his literary life with banners flying.

In the year 1859 Dickens' readings had been comparatively few; and they had ceased altogether in the following year, when the *Uncommercial Traveller* began his wanderings. The winter from 1859 to 1860 was his last winter at Tavistock House; and, with the exception of his rooms in Wellington Street, he had now no settled residence but Gad's Hill Place. He sought its pleasant retreat about the beginning of June, after the new experience of an attack of rheumatism had made him recognise "the necessity of country training all through the summer." Yet such was the recuperative power, or the indomitable self-confidence, of his nature, that after he had in these summer months contributed some of the most delightful *Uncommercial Traveller* papers to his journal, we find him already in August "prowling about, meditating a new book."

It is refreshing to think of Dickens in this pleasant interval of country life, before he had rushed once more into the excitement of his labours as a public reader. We may picture him to ourselves, accompanied by his dogs, striding along the country roads and lanes, exploring the

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wonder that Dickens' descriptive genius should become refreshed by these studies of his subject, and that thus *Great Expectations* should have indisputably become one of the most picturesque of his books. But it is something very much more at the same time. The *Tale of Two Cities* had as a story strongly seized upon the attention of the reader. But in the earlier chapters of *Great Expectations* everyone felt that Dickens was himself again. Since the Yarmouth scenes in *David Copperfield* he had written nothing in which description married itself to sentiment so humorously and so tenderly. Uncouth, and slow, and straightforward, and gentle of heart, like Mr. Peggotty, Joe Gargery is as new a conception as he is a genuinely true one; nor is it easy to know under what aspect to relish him most, whether disconsolate in his Sunday clothes, "like some extraordinary bird, standing, as he did, speechless, with his tuft of feathers ruffled, and his mouth open as if he wanted a worm," or at home by his own fireside, winking at his little comrade, and, when caught in the act by his wife, "drawing the back of his hand across his nose with his usual conciliatory air on such occasions." Nor since *David Copperfield* had Dickens again shown such an insight as he showed here into the world of a child's mind. "To be quite sure," he wrote to Forster, "I had fallen into no unconscious repetitions, I read *David Copperfield* again the other day, and was affected by it to a degree you would hardly believe." His fears were unnecessary; for with all its charm the history of Pip lacks the personal element which insures our sympathy to the earlier story and to its hero. In delicacy, of feeling, however, as well as in humour of description, nothing in Dickens surpasses the earlier chap-

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must be ranked among the very best of Dickens' later novels, as combining, with the closer construction and intenser narrative force common to several of these, not a little of the delightfully genial humour of his earlier works.

Already before *Great Expectations* was completely published, Dickens had given a few readings at the St. James's Hall, and by the end of October in the same year, 1861, he was once more engaged in a full course of country readings. They occupied him till the following January, only ten days being left for his Christmas Number, and a brief holiday for Christmas itself; so close was the adjustment of time and work by this favourite of fortune. The death of his faithful Arthur Smith befell most untowardly before the country readings were begun, but their success was unbroken, from Scotland to South Devon. The long-contemplated extract from *Copperfield* had at last been added to the list—a self-sacrifice *coram publico*, hallowed by success—and another from *Nicholas Nickleby*, which "went in the wildest manner." He was, however, nearly worn-out with fatigue before these winter readings were over, and was glad to snatch a moment of repose before a short spring course in town began. Scarcely was this finished, when he was coquetting in his mind with an offer from Australia, and had already proposed to himself to throw in, as a piece of work by the way, a series of papers to be called *The Uncommercial Traveller Upside Down*. Meanwhile, a few readings for a charitable purpose in Paris, and a short summer course at St. James's Hall, completed this second series in the year 1863.

Whatever passing thoughts overwork by day or sleeplessness at night may have occasionally brought with them, Dickens himself would have been strangely surprised, as no doubt would have been the great body of

a public to which he was by this time about the best known man in England, had he been warned that weakness and weariness were not to be avoided even by a nature endowed with faculties so splendid and with an energy so conquering as his. He seemed to stand erect in the strength of his matured powers, equal as of old to any task which he set himself, and exulting, though with less buoyancy of spirit than of old, in the wreaths which continued to strew his path. Yet already the ranks of his contemporaries were growing thinner, while close to himself death was taking away members of the generation before, and of that after, his own. Among them was his mother—of whom his biography and his works have little to say or to suggest—and his second son. Happy events, too, had in the due course of things contracted the family circle at Gad's Hill. Of his intimates, he lost, in 1863, Augustus Egg; and in 1864, John Leech, to whose genius he had himself formerly rendered eloquent homage.

A still older associate, the great painter Stanfield, survived till 1867; "no one of your father's friends," Dickens then wrote to Stanfield's son, "can ever have loved him more dearly than I always did, or can have better known the worth of his noble character." Yet another friend, who however, so far as I can gather, had not, at any time, belonged to Dickens' most familiar circle, had died on Christmas Eve, 1863—Thackeray, whom it had for some time become customary to compare or contrast with him as his natural rival. Yet in point of fact, save for the tenderness which, as with all humourists of the highest order, was an important element in their writings, and save for the influences of time and country to which they were both subject, there are hardly two other among our great humorists who have less in common. Their unlikeness shows

itself, among other things, in the use made by Thackeray of suggestions which it is difficult to believe he did not in the first instance owe to Dickens. Who would venture to call Captain Costigan a plagiarism from Mr. Snevellici, or to assert that Wenham and Wagg were copied from Pyke and Pluck, or that Major Pendennis—whose pardon one feels inclined to beg for the juxtaposition — was founded upon Major Bagstock, or the Old Campaigner in the *Newcomes* on the Old Soldier in *Copperfield?* But that suggestions were in these and perhaps in a few other instances derived from Dickens by Thackeray for some of his most masterly characters, it would, I think, be idle to deny. In any case, the style of these two great writers differed as profoundly as their way of looking at men and things. Yet neither of them lacked a thorough appreciation of the other's genius; and it is pleasant to remember that after paying in *Pendennis* a tribute to the purity of Dickens' books, Thackeray, in a public lecture referred to his supposed rival in a way which elicited from the latter the warmest of acknowledgments. It cannot be said that the memorial words, which after Thackeray's death Dickens was prevailed upon to contribute to the *Cornhill Magazine*, did more than justice to the great writer whom England had just lost; but it is well that the kindly and unstinting tribute of admiration should remain on record, to contradict any supposition that a disagreement which had some years previously disturbed the harmony of their intercourse, and of which the world had, according to its wont, made the most, had really estranged two generous minds from one another. The effort which on this occasion Dickens made, is in itself a proof of his kindly feeling towards Thackeray. Of Talfourd and Landor and Stanfield, he could write readily

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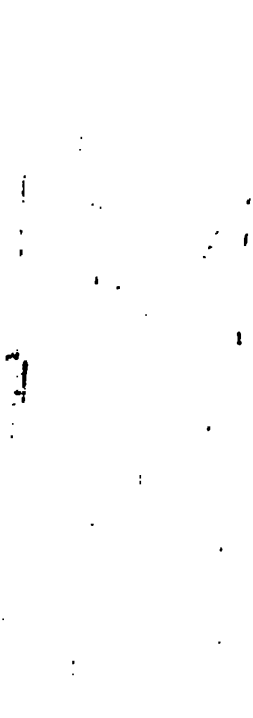
that the last of the *All the Year Round* Christmas Numbers, the continuous story of *No Thoroughfare*, was written by Dickens and Mr. Wilkie Collins in 1867 with a direct eye to its subsequent adaptation to the stage, for which it actually was fitted by Mr. Wilkie Collins in the following year. The place of its production, the Adelphi, suited the broad effects and the rather conventional comic humour of the story and piece. From America, Dickens watched the preparation of the piece with unflagging interest; and his innate and irrepressible genius for stage-management reveals itself in the following passage from a letter written by him to an American friend soon after his return to England: "*No Thoroughfare* is very shortly coming out in Paris, where it is now in active rehearsal. It is still playing here, but without Fechter, who has been very ill. He and Wilkie raised so many pieces of stage-effect here, that, unless I am quite satisfied with the report, I shall go over and try my stage-managerial hand at the Vaudeville Theatre. I particularly want the drugging and attempted robbery in the bedroom-scene at the Swiss Inn to be done to the sound of a waterfall rising and falling with the wind. Although in the very opening of that scene they speak of the waterfall, and listen to it, nobody thought of its mysterious music. I could make it, with a good stage-carpenter, in an hour."

Great Expectations had been finished in 1860, and already in the latter part of 1861, the year which comprised the main portion of his second series of readings, he had been thinking of a new story. He had even found a title—the unlucky title which he afterwards adopted—but in 1862 the tempting Australian invitation had been a serious obstacle in his way. "I can force myself to go



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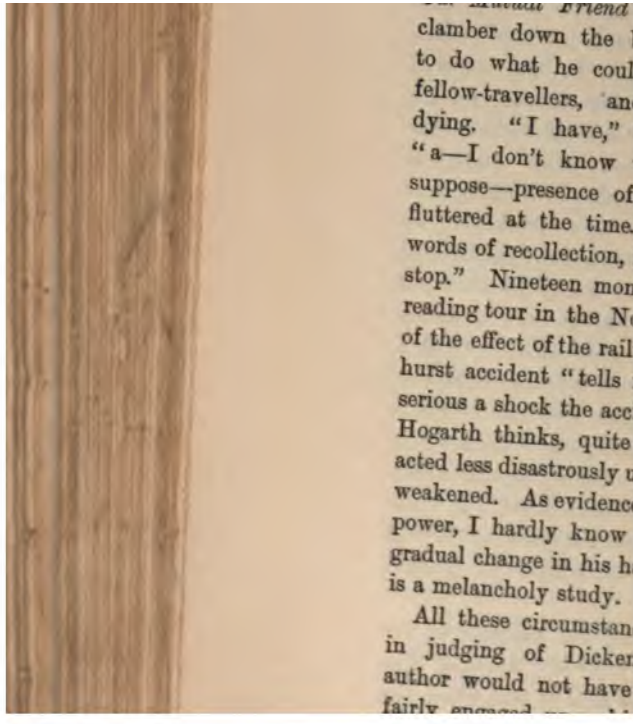
Our Mutual Friend, and slowly, and without his old self-confidence, he had, in the latter part of 1863, set to work upon it. "I want to prepare it for the spring, but I am determined not to begin to publish with less than four numbers done. I see my opening perfectly, with the one main line on which the story is to turn, and if I don't strike while the iron (meaning myself) is hot, I shall drift off again, and have to go through all this uneasiness once more." For, unfortunately, he had resolved on returning to the old twenty-number measure for his new story. Begun with an effort, *Our Mutual Friend*—the publication of which extended from May, 1864, to November, 1865—was completed under difficulties, and difficulties of a kind hitherto unknown to Dickens. In February, 1865, as an immediate consequence, perhaps, of exposure at a time when depression of spirits rendered him less able than usual to bear it, he had a severe attack of illness, of which Forster says that it "put a broad mark between his past life and what remained to him of the future." From this time forward he felt a lameness in his left foot, which continued to trouble him at intervals during the remainder of his life, and which finally communicated itself to the left hand. A comparison of times, however, convinced Forster that the real origin of this ailment was to be sought in general causes.

In 1865, as the year wore on, and the pressure of the novel still continued, he felt that he was "working himself into a damaged state," and was near to that which has greater terrors for natures like his than for more placid temperaments—breaking down. So, in May, he went first to the seaside and then to France. On his return—it was the 9th of June, the date of his death five years



ranted. *Our Mutual Friend*[1] is, like the rest of Dickens' later writings, carefully and skilfully put together as a story. No exception is to be taken to it on the ground that the identity on which much of the plot hinges is long foreseen by the reader; for this, as Dickens told his critics in his postscript, had been part of his design, and was, in fact, considering the general nature of the story, almost indispensable. The defect rather lies in the absence of that element of uncertainty which is needed in order to sustain the interest. The story is, no doubt, ingeniously enough constructed, but admiration of an ingenious construction is insufficient to occupy the mind of a reader through an inevitable disentanglement. Moreover, some of the machinery, though cleverly contrived, cannot be said to work easily. Thus, the *ruse* of the excellent Boffin in playing the part of a skinflint might pass as a momentary device, but its inherent improbability, together with the likelihood of its leading to an untoward result, makes its protraction undeniably tedious. It is not, however, in my opinion at least, in the matter of construction that *Our Mutual Friend* presents a painful contrast with earlier works produced, like it, "on a large canvas." The conduct of the story as a whole is fully vigorous enough to enchain the attention; and in portions of it the hand of the master displays its unique power. He is at his best in the whole of the waterside scenes, both where The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters (identified by zealous dis-

[1] This title has helped to extinguish the phrase of which it consists. Few would now be found to agree with the last clause of Flora's parenthesis in *Little Dorrit*: "Our mutual friend—too cold a word for me; at least I don't mean that, very proper expression, mutual friend."

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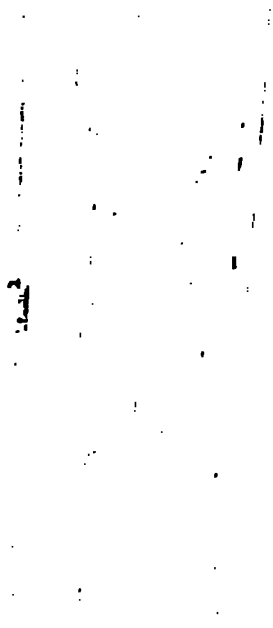
there are the outlines of some figures of genuine humour, but the outlines only; nor is Bella raised into the sphere of the charming out of that of the pert and skittish. A more ambitious attempt, and a more noteworthy failure, was the endeavour to give to the main plot of this novel such a satiric foil as the Circumlocution Office had furnished to the chief action of *Little Dorrit*, in a caricature of society at large, its surface varnish and its internal rottenness. The Barnacles, and those who deemed it their duty to rally round the Barnacles, had, we saw, felt themselves hard hit; but what sphere or section of society could feel itself specially caricatured in the Veneerings, or in their associates — the odious Lady Tippins, the impossibly brutal Podsnap, Fascination Fledgeby, and the Lammles, a couple which suggests nothing but antimony and the Chamber of Horrors? Caricature such as this, representing no society that has ever in any part of the world pretended to be "good," corresponds to the wild rhetoric of the superfluous Betty Higden episode against the "gospel according to Podsnappery;" but it is, in truth, satire from which both wit and humour have gone out. An angry, often almost spasmodic, mannerism has to supply their place. Among the personages moving in "society" are two which, as playing serious parts in the progress of the plot, the author is necessarily obliged to seek to endow with the flesh and blood of real human beings. Yet it is precisely in these—the friends Eugene and Mortimer—that, in the earlier part of the novel at all events, the constraint of the author's style seems least relieved; the dialogues between these two Templars have an unnaturalness about them as intolerable as euphuism or the effeminacies of the Augustan age. It is true that, when the story reaches

its tragic height, the character of Eugene is borne along with it, and his affectations are forgotten. But in previous parts of the book, where he poses as a wit, and is evidently meant for a gentleman, he fails to make good his claims to either character. Even the skilfully contrived contrast between the rivals Eugene Wrayburn and the schoolmaster Bradley Headstone—through whom and through whose pupil, Dickens, by the way, dealt another blow against a system of mental training founded upon facts alone—fails to bring out the conception of Eugene which the author manifestly had in his mind. Lastly, the old way of reconciling dissonances—a marriage which "society" calls a *mésalliance*—has rarely furnished a lamer ending than here; and, had the unwritten laws of English popular fiction permitted, a tragic close would have better accorded with the sombre hue of the most powerful portions of this curiously unequal romance.

The effort—for such it was—of *Our Mutual Friend* had not been over for more than a few months, when Dickens accepted a proposal for thirty nights' readings from the Messrs. Chappell; and by April, 1866, he was again hard at work, flying across the country into Lancashire and Scotland, and back to his temporary London residence in Southwick Place, Hyde Park. In any man more capable than Dickens of controlling the restlessness which consumed him, the acceptance of this offer would have been incomprehensible; for his heart had been declared out of order by his physician, and the patient had shown himself in some degree awake to the significance of this opinion. But the readings were begun and accomplished notwithstanding, though not without warnings, on which he insisted on putting his own interpretation. Sleeplessness aggravated fatigue, and stimulants were already neces-

sary to enable him to do the work of his readings without discomfort. Meanwhile, some weeks before they were finished, he had been induced to enter into negotiations about a further engagement to begin at the end of the year. Time was to be left for the Christmas Number, which this year could hardly find its scene anywhere else than at a railway junction; and the readings were not to extend over forty nights, which seem ultimately to have been increased to fifty. This second series, which included a campaign in Ireland—brilliantly successful despite snow and rain, and Fenians—was over in May. Then came the climax, for America now claimed her share of the great author for her public halls and chapels and lecture-theatres; and the question of the summer and autumn was whether or not to follow the sound of the distant dollar. It was closely debated between Dickens and his friend Forster and Wills, and he describes himself as "tempest-tossed" with doubts; but his mind had inclined in one direction from the first, and the matter was virtually decided when he resolved to send a confidential agent to make inquiries on the spot. Little imported another and grave attack in his foot; the trusty Mr. Dolby's report was irresistible. Eighty readings within half a year was the estimated number, with profits amounting to over fifteen thousand pounds. The gains actually made were nearly five thousand pounds in excess of this calculation.

A farewell banquet, under the presidency of Lord Lytton, gave the favourite author Godspeed on his journey to the larger half of his public; on the 9th of November he sailed from Liverpool, and on the 19th landed at Boston. The voyage, on which, with his old buoyancy, he had contrived to make himself master of the modest



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During these journeyings Dickens gave himself up altogether to the business of his readings, only occasionally allowing himself to accept the hospitality proffered him on every side. Thus only could he breast the difficulties of his enterprise; for, as I have said, his health was never good during the whole of his visit, and his exertions were severe, though eased by the self-devotion of his attendants, of which, as of his constant kindness, both serious and sportive, towards them, it is touching to read. Already in January, he describes himself as not seldom "so dead beat" at the close of a reading "that they lay me down on a sofa, after I have been washed and dressed, and I lie there, extremely faint, for a quarter of an hour," and as suffering from intolerable sleeplessness at night. His appetite was equally disordered, and he lived mainly on stimulants. Why had he condemned himself to such a life?

When at last he could declare the stress of his work over, he described himself as "nearly used up. Climate, distance, catarrh, travelling, and hard work, have begun —I may say so, now they are nearly all over—to tell heavily upon me. Sleeplessness besets me; and if I had engaged to go on into May, I think I must have broken down." Indeed, but for his wonderful energy and the feeling of exultation which is derived from a heavy task nearly accomplished, he would have had to follow the advice of "Longfellow and all the Cambridge men," and give in nearly at the last. But he persevered through the farewell readings, both at Boston and at New York, though on the night before the last reading in America, he told Dolby that if he "had to read but twice more, instead of once, he couldn't do it." This last reading of all was given at New York on April 20th, two days after a farewell banquet at Delmonico's. It was

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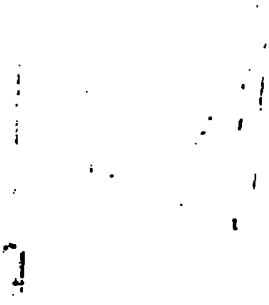
short a life from which much noble fruit might still have been expected for our literature, and which in any case might have been prolonged as a blessing beyond all that gold can buy to those who loved him.

Meanwhile, he had allowed himself a short respite, before resuming his labours in October. It was not more, his friends thought, than he needed, for much of his old buoyancy seemed to them to be wanting in him, except when hospitality or the intercourse of friendship called it forth. What a charm there still was in his genial humour his letters would suffice to show. It does one good to read his description to his kind American friends Mr. and Mrs. Fields of his tranquillity at Gad's Hill: "Divers birds sing here all day, and the nightingales all night. The place is lovely, and in perfect order. I have put five mirrors in the Swiss châlet where I write, and they reflect and refract in all kinds of ways the leaves that are quivering at the windows, and the great fields of waving corn, and the sail-dotted river. My room is up among the branches of the trees, and the birds and the butterflies fly in and out, and the green branches shoot in at the open windows, and the lights and shadows of the clouds come and go with the rest of the company. The scent of the flowers, and indeed of everything that is growing for miles and miles, is most delicious."

Part of this rare leisure he generously devoted to the preparation for the press of a volume of literary remains from the pen of an old friend. The *Religious Opinions of Chauncey Hare Townshend* should not be altogether overlooked by those interested in Dickens, to whom the loose undogmatic theology of his friend commended itself as readily as the sincere religious feeling underlying it. I cannot say what answer Dickens would have returned



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of camel-swallowing and of gnat-straining." Of Puritanism in its modern forms he was an uncompromising, and no doubt a conscientious, opponent; and though, with perfect sincerity, he repelled the charge that his attacks upon cant were attacks upon religion, yet their *animus* is such as to make the misinterpretation intelligible. His dissenting ministers are of the *Bartholomew Fair* species, and though, in his later books, a good clergyman here and there makes his modest appearance, the balance can hardly be said to be satisfactorily redressed.

The performance of this pious office was not the only kind act he did after his return from America. Of course, however, his own family was nearest to his heart. No kinder or more judicious words were ever addressed by a father to his children than those which, about this time, he wrote to one of his sons, then beginning a successful career at Cambridge, and to another—the youngest—who was setting forth for Australia, to join an elder brother already established in that country. "Poor Plorn," he afterwards wrote, "is gone to Australia. It was a hard parting at the last. He seemed to me to become once more my youngest and favourite child as the day drew near, and I did not think I could have been so shaken."

In October his "farewell" readings began. He had never had his heart more in the work than now. Curiously enough, not less than two proposals had reached him during this autumn—one from Birmingham and the other from Edinburgh—that he should allow himself to be put forward as a candidate for Parliament; but he declined to entertain either, though in at least one of the two cases the prospects of success would not have been small. His views of political and parliamentary life had not changed since he had written to Bulwer Lytton in 1865: "Would

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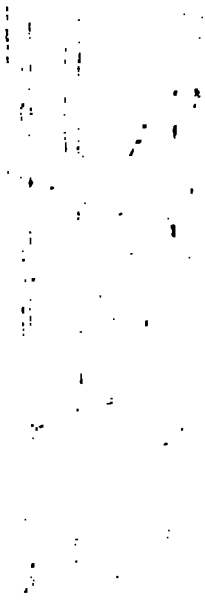
had marked out for himself. The subject which now occupied him before all others was a scheme for a new reading, with which it was his wish to vary and to intensify the success of the series on which he was engaged. This was no other than a selection of scenes from *Oliver Twist*, culminating in the scene of the murder of Nancy by Sikes, which, before producing it in public, he resolved to "try" upon a select private audience. The trial was a brilliant success; "the public," exclaimed a famous actress who was present, "have been looking out for a sensation these last fifty years or so, and, by heaven, they have got it!' Accordingly, from January, 1869, it formed one of the most frequent of his readings, and the effort which it involved counted for much in the collapse which was to follow. Never were the limits between reading and acting more thoroughly effaced by Dickens, and never was the production of an extraordinary effect more equally shared by author and actor. But few who witnessed this extraordinary performance can have guessed the elaborate preparation bestowed upon it, which is evident from the following notes (by Mr. C. Kent) on the book used in it by the reader:

What is as striking as anything in all this reading, however—that is, in the reading copy of it now lying before us as we write—is the mass of hints as to the byplay in the stage directions for himself, so to speak, scattered up and down the margin. "Fagin raised his right hand, and shook his trembling forefinger in the air," is there on page 101 in print. Beside it, on the margin in MS., is the word "*Action.*" Not a word of it was said. It was simply *done*. Again, immediately below that, on the same page—Sikes *loquitur*: "Oh! you haven't, haven't you?" passing a pistol into a more convenient pocket ("*Action*" again in MS. on the margin). Not a word was said about the pistol. . . . So again, afterwards, as a rousing self-direction, one sees notified in MS. on page 107, the grim stage direction, "*Murder coming!*"



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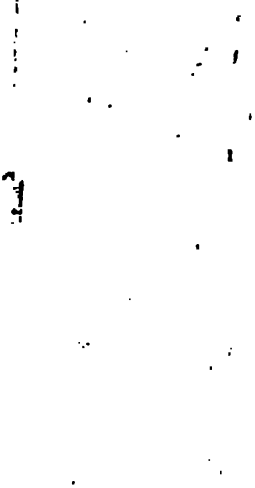
those who did most to make it bright for him, "was a very happy one," and gladdened by the visits of many friends. On the retirement, also on account of ill-health, from *All the Year Round*, of his second self, Mr. W. H. Wills, he was fortunately able at once to supply the vacant place by the appointment to it of his eldest son, who seems to have inherited that sense of lucid order which was among his father's most distinctive characteristics. He travelled very little this year, though in September he made a speech at Birmingham on behalf of his favourite Midland Institute, delivering himself, at its conclusion, of an antithetical radical commonplace, which, being misreported or misunderstood, was commented upon with much unnecessary wonderment. With a view to avoiding the danger of excessive fatigue, the latter part of the year was chiefly devoted to writing in advance part of his new book, which, like *Great Expectations*, was to grow up, and to be better for growing up, in his own Kentish home, and almost within sound of the bells of "Cloisterham" Cathedral. But the new book was never to be finished.

The first number of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was not published till one more short series of twelve readings, given in London during a period extending from January to March, was at an end. He had obtained Sir Thomas Watson's consent to his carrying out this wish, largely caused by the desire to compensate the Messrs. Chappell in some measure for the disappointment to which he had been obliged to subject them by the interruption of his longer engagement. Thus, though the Christmas of 1869 had brought with it another warning of trouble in the foot, the year 1870 opened busily, and early in January Dickens established himself for the season at 5, Hyde

Park Place. Early in the month he made another speech at Birmingham; but the readings were strictly confined to London. On the other hand, it was not to be expected that the "Murder" would be excluded from the list. It was read in January, to an audience of actors and actresses; and it is pleasant to think that he was able to testify to his kindly feeling towards their profession on one of the last occasions when he appeared on his own stage. "I set myself," he wrote, "to carrying out of themselves and their observation, those who were bent on watching how the effects were got, and, I believe, I succeeded. Coming back to it again, however, I feel it was madness ever to do it so continuously. My ordinary pulse is seventy-two, and it runs up under this effort to one hundred and twelve." Yet this fatal reading was repeated thrice more before the series closed, and with even more startling results upon the reader. The careful observations made by his physician, however, show that the excitement of the last readings was altogether too great for any man to have endured much longer. At last, on March 16th, the night came which closed fifteen years of personal relations between the English public and its favourite author, such as are, after all, unparalleled in the history of our literature. His farewell words were few and simple; and referred with dignity to his resolution to devote himself henceforth exclusively to his calling as an author, and to his hope that in but two short weeks' time his audience "might enter, in their own homes, on a new series of readings at which his assistance would be indispensable."

Of the short time which remained to him his last book was the chief occupation; and an association thus clings to the *Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which would, in any

case, incline us to treat this fragment—for it was to be no more—with tenderness. One would, indeed, hardly be justified in asserting that this story, like that which Thackeray left behind him in the same unfinished state, bade fair to become a masterpiece in its author's later manner; there is much that is forced in its humour, while as to the working out of the chief characters our means of judgment are of course incomplete. The outline of the design, on the other hand, presents itself with tolerable clearness to the minds of most readers of insight or experience, though the story deserves its name of a mystery, instead of, like *Our Mutual Friend*, seeming merely to withhold a necessary explanation. And it must be allowed that few plots have ever been more effectively laid than this, of which the untying will never be known. Three such personages in relation to a deed of darkness as Jasper for its contriver, Durden for its unconscious accomplice, and Deputy for its self-invited witness, and all so naturally connecting themselves with the locality of the perpetration of the crime, assuredly could not have been brought together, except by one who had gradually attained to mastership in the adaptation of characters to the purposes of a plot. Still, the strongest impression left upon the reader of this fragment, is the evidence it furnishes of Dickens having retained to the last powers which were most peculiarly and distinctively his own. Having skilfully brought into connexion, for the purposes of his plot, two such strangely-contrasted spheres of life and death, as the cathedral close at "Cloisterham" and an opium-smoking den in one of the obscurest corners of London, he is enabled, by his imaginative and observing powers, not only to *realise* the picturesque elements in both scenes, but also to convert them into a twofold background, accom-



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mount above the dining-room floor. Already in March the Queen had found a suitable opportunity for inviting him to wait upon her at Buckingham Palace, when she had much gratified him by her kindly manner; and a few days later he made his appearance at the levee. These acknowledgments of his position as an English author were as they should be; no others were offered, nor is it a matter of regret that there should have been no titles to inscribe on his tomb. He was also twice seen on one of those public occasions which no eloquence graced so readily and so pleasantly as his: once in April, at the dinner for the Newsvendors' Charity, when he spoke of the existence among his humble clients of that "feeling of brotherhood and sympathy which is worth much to all men, or they would herd with wolves;" and once in May—only a day or two before he went home into the country—when at the Royal Academy dinner, he paid a touching tribute to the eminent painter, Daniel Maclise, who in the good old days had been much like a brother to himself. Another friend and companion, Mark Lemon, passed away a day or two afterwards; and with the most intimate of all, his future biographer, he lamented the familiar faces of their companions—not one of whom had passed his sixtieth year—upon which they were not to look again. On the 30th of May he was once more at Gad's Hill.

Here he forthwith set to work on his book, taking walks as usual, though of no very great length. On Thursday, the 9th of June, he had intended to pay his usual weekly visit to the office of his journal, and accordingly, on the 8th, devoted the afternoon as well as the morning to finishing the sixth number of the story. When he came across to the house from the châlet before dinner, he seemed, to his sister-in-law, who alone of the family was at home,

tired and silent, and, no sooner had they sat down to dinner, than she noticed how seriously ill he looked. It speedily became evident that a fit was upon him. "Come and lie down," she entreated. "Yes, on the ground," he said, very distinctly—these were the last words he spoke—and he slid from her arm, and fell upon the floor. He was laid on a couch in the room, and there he remained unconscious almost to the last. He died at ten minutes past six on the evening of the 9th—by which time his daughters and his eldest son had been able to join the faithful watcher by his side; his sister and his son Henry arrived when all was over.

His own desire had been to be buried near Gad's Hill; though at one time he is said to have expressed a wish to lie in a disused graveyard, which is still pointed out, in a secluded corner in the moat of Rochester Castle. Preparations had been made accordingly, when the Dean and Chapter of Rochester urged a request that his remains might be placed in their Cathedral. This was assented to; but at the last moment the Dean of Westminster gave expression to a widespread wish that the great national writer might lie in the national Abbey. There he was buried on June 14th, without the slightest attempt at the pomp which he had deprecated in his will, and which he almost fiercely condemned in more than one of his writings. "The funeral," writes Dean Stanley, whose own dust now mingles with that of so many illustrious dead, "was strictly private. It took place at an early hour in the summer morning, the grave having been dug in secret the night before, and the vast solitary space of the Abbey was occupied only by the small band of the mourners, and the Abbey clergy, who, without any music except the occasional peal of the organ, read the funeral service. For days the spot was visited

by thousands; many were the tears shed by the poorer visitors. He rests beside Sheridan, Garrick, and Henderson"—the first actor ever buried in the Abbey. Associations of another kind cluster near; but his generous spirit would not have disdained the thought that he would seem even in death the players' friend.

A plain memorial brass on the walls of Rochester Cathedral vindicates the share which the ancient city and its neighbourhood will always have in his fame. But most touching of all it is to think of him under the trees of his own garden on the hill, in the pleasant home where, after so many labours and so many wanderings, he died in peace, and as one who had earned his rest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FUTURE OF DICKENS' FAME.

THERE is no reason whatever to believe that in the few years which have gone by since Dickens' death the delight taken in his works throughout England and North America, as well as elsewhere, has diminished, or that he is not still one of our few most popular writers. The mere fact that his popularity has remained such since, nearly half a century ago he, like a beam of spring sunshine, first made the world gay, is a sufficient indication of the influence which he must have exercised upon his age. In our world of letters his followers have been many, though naturally enough those whose original genius impelled them to follow their own course soonest ceased to be his imitators. Among these I know no more signal instance than the great novelist whose surpassing merits he had very swiftly recognised in her earliest work. For though in the *Scenes of Clerical Life* George Eliot seems to be, as it were, hesitating between Dickens and Thackeray as the models of her humorous writing, reminiscences of the former are unmistakeable in the opening of *Amos Barton*, in *Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story*, in *Janet's Repentance*; and though it would be hazardous to trace his influence in the domestic scenes in *Adam Bede*, neither a Christmas exordium in one of the books of *The Mill on the Floss*.

nor the Sam Weller-like freshness of Bob Jakin in the same powerful story, is altogether the author's own. Two of the most successful continental novelists of the present day have gone to school with Dickens: the one the truly national writer whose *Debit and Credit*, a work largely in the manner of his English model, has, as a picture of modern life, remained unexcelled in German literature;[1] the other, the brilliant Southerner, who may write as much of the *History of his Books* as his public may desire to learn, but who cannot write the pathos of Dickens altogether out of *Jack*, or his farcical fun out of *Le Nabab*. And again—for I am merely illustrating, not attempting to describe, the literary influence of Dickens—who could fail to trace in the Californian studies and sketches of Bret Harte elements of humour and of pathos, to which that genuinely original author would be the last to deny that his great English "Master" was no stranger?

Yet popularity and literary influence, however wide and however strong, often pass away as they have come; and in no field of literature are there many reputations which the sea of time fails before very long to submerge. In prose fiction—a comparatively young literary growth—they are certainly not the most numerous, perhaps because on works of this species the manners and style of an age most readily impress themselves, rendering them proportionately strange to the ages that come after. In the works of even the lesser playwrights who pleased the liberal times of Elizabeth, and in lyrics of even secondary merit that were admired

[1] In the last volume of his *magnum opus* of historical fiction, Gustav Freytag, describes "Boz" as about the year 1846, filling with boundless enthusiasm the hearts of young men and maidens in a small Silesian country town.

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that he was to his own. Much that constitutes the subject, or at least furnishes the background, of his pictures of English life, like the Fleet Prison and the Marshalsea, has vanished, or is being improved off the face of the land. The form, again, of Dickens' principal works may become obsolete, as it was in a sense accidental. He was the most popular novelist of his day; but should prose fiction, or even the full and florid species of it which has enjoyed so long-lived a favour ever be out of season, the popularity of Dickens' books must experience an inevitable diminution. And even before that day arrives, not all the works in a particular species of literature that may to a particular age have seemed destined to live, will have been preserved. Nothing is more surely tested by time than that originality which is the secret of a writer's continuing to be famous, and continuing to be read.

Dickens was not—and to whom in these latter ages of literature could such a term be applied?—a self-made writer, in the sense that he owed nothing to those who had gone before him. He was most assuredly no classical scholar,—how could he have been? But I should hesitate to call him an ill-read man, though he certainly was neither a great nor a catholic reader, and though he could not help thinking about *Nicholas Nickleby* while he was reading the *Curse of Kehama*. In his own branch of literature his judgment was sound and sure-footed. It was of course a happy accident, that as a boy he imbibed that taste for good fiction which is a thing inconceivable to the illiterate. Sneers have been directed against the poverty of his bookshelves in his earlier days of authorship; but I fancy there were not many popular novelists in 1839 who would have taken down with them into the country for a summer sojourn, as Dickens did to Petersham, not only a couple

of Scott's novels, but Goldsmith, Swift, Fielding, Smollett, and the British Essayists; nor is there one of these national classics—unless it be Swift—with whom Dickens' books or letters fail to show him to have been familiar. Of Goldsmith's books, he told Forster, in a letter which the biographer of Goldsmith modestly suppressed, he "had no indifferent perception—to the best of his remembrance—when little more than a child." He discusses with understanding the relative literary merits of the serious and humorous papers in *The Spectator*; and, with regard to another work of unique significance in the history of English fiction, *Robinson Crusoe*, he acutely observed that "one of the most popular books on earth has nothing in it to make anyone laugh or cry." "It is a book," he added, which he "read very much." It may be noted, by the way, that he was an attentive and judicious student of Hogarth; and that thus his criticisms of humorous pictorial art rested upon as broad a basis of comparison as did his judgment of his great predecessors in English humorous fiction.

Among these predecessors it has become usual to assert that Smollett exercised the greatest influence upon Dickens. It is no doubt true that in David Copperfield's library Smollett's books are mentioned first, and in the greatest number, that a vision of Roderick Random and Strap haunted the very wicket-gate at Blunderstone, that the poor little hero's first thought on entering the King's Bench prison was the strange company whom Roderick met in the Marshalsea; and that the references to Smollett and his books are frequent in Dickens' other books and in his letters. Leghorn seemed to him "made illustrious" by Smollett's grave, and in a late period of his life he criticises his chief fictions with admirable justice.

"*Humphry Clinker*," he writes, "is certainly Smollett's best. I am rather divided between *Peregrine Pickle* and *Roderick Random*, both extraordinarily good in their way, which is a way without tenderness; but you will have to read them both, and I send the first volume of *Peregrine* as the richer of the two." An odd volume of *Peregrine* was one of the books with which the waiter at the *Holly Tree Inn* endeavoured to beguile the lonely Christmas of the snowed-up traveller, but the latter "knew every word of it already." In the *Lazy Tour*, "Thomas, now just able to grope his way along, in a doubled-up condition, was no bad embodiment of Commodore Trunnion." I have noted, moreover, coincidences of detail which bear witness to Dickens' familiarity with Smollett's works. To Lieutenant Bowling and Commodore Trunnion, as to Captain Cuttle, every man was a "brother," and to the Commodore, as to Mr. Smallweed, the most abusive substantive addressed to a woman admitted of intensification by the epithet "brimstone." I think Dickens had not forgotten the opening of the *Adventures of an Atom* when he wrote a passage in the opening of his own *Christmas Carol*; and that the characters of Tom Pinch and Tommy Traddles—the former more especially—were not conceived without some thought of honest Strap. Furthermore, it was Smollett's example that probably suggested to Dickens the attractive jingle in the title of his *Nicholas Nickleby*. But these are for the most part mere details. The manner of Dickens as a whole resembles Fielding's more strikingly than Smollett's, as it was only natural that it should. The irony of Smollett is drier than was reconcileable with Dickens' nature; it is only in the occasional extravagances of his humour that the former anticipates anything in the latter, and it is only the coarsest scenes of Dickens

earlier books—such as that between Noah, Charlotte, and Mrs. Sowerberry in *Oliver Twist*—which recall the whole manner of his predecessor. They resemble one another in their descriptive accuracy, and in the accumulation of detail by which they produce instead of obscuring vividness of impression; but it was impossible that Dickens should prefer the general method of the novel of adventure pure and simple, such as Smollett produced after the example of *Gil Blas*, to the less crude form adopted by Fielding, who adhered to earlier and nobler models. With Fielding's, moreover, Dickens' whole nature was congenial; they both had that tenderness which Smollett lacked; and the circumstance that of all English writers of the past, Fielding's name alone was given by Dickens to one of his sons, shows how, like so many of Fielding's readers, he had learnt to love him with an almost personal affection. The very spirit of the author of *Tom Jones*—that gaiety which, to borrow the saying of a recent historian concerning Cervantes, renders even brutality agreeable, and that charm of sympathetic feeling which makes us love those of his characters which he loves himself—seem astir in some of the most delightful passages of Dickens' most delightful books. So in *Pickwick*, to begin with, in which, by the way, Fielding is cited with a twinkle of the eye all his own, and in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, where a chapter opens with a passage which is pure Fielding:

> It was morning, and the beautiful Aurora, of whom, so much hath been written, said, and sung, did, with her rosy fingers, nip and tweak Miss Pecksniff's nose. It was the frolicsome custom of the goddess, in her intercourse with the fair Cherry, to do so; or in more prosaic phrase, the tip of that feature in the sweet girl's countenance was always very red at breakfast-time.

Among the writers of Dickens' own age there were only two, or perhaps three, who in very different degrees and ways, exercised a noticeable influence upon his writings. He once declared to Washington Irving that he kept everything written by that delightful author upon "his shelves, and in his thoughts, and in his heart of hearts." And, doubtless, in Dickens' early days as an author the influence of the American classic may have aided to stimulate the imaginative element in his English admirer's genius, and to preserve him from a grossness of humour into which, after the *Sketches by Boz*, he very rarely allowed himself to lapse. The two other writers were Carlyle, and, as I have frequently noted in previous chapters, the friend and fellow-labourer of Dickens' later manhood, Mr. Wilkie Collins. It is no unique experience that the disciple should influence the master; and in this instance, perhaps with the co-operation of the examples of the modern French theatre, which the two friends had studied in common, Mr. Wilkie Collins' manner had, I think, no small share in bringing about a transformation in that of Dickens. His stories thus gradually lost all traces of the older masters both in general method and in detail; while he came to condense and concentrate his effects in successions of skilfully-arranged scenes. Dickens' debt to Carlyle was, of course, of another nature; and in his works the proofs are not few of his readiness to accept the teachings of one whom he declared he would "go at all times farther to see than any man alive." There was something singular in the admiration these two men felt for one another; for Carlyle, after an acquaintance of almost thirty years, spoke of Dickens as "a most cordial, sincere, clear-sighted, quietly decisive, just, and loving man;" and there is not one of these epithets but seems well con-

sidered and well chosen. But neither Carlyle nor Dickens possessed a moral quality omitted in this list, the quality of patience, which abhors either "quietly" or loudly "deciding" a question before considering it under all its aspects, and in a spirit of fairness to all sides. The *Latter Day Pamphlets*, to confine myself to them,[1] like so much of the political philosophy, if it is to be dignified by that name, which in part Dickens derived from them, were at the time effective strokes of satirical invective; now, their edge seems blunt and their energy inflation. Take the pamphlet on Model Prisons, with its summary of a theory which Dickens sought in every way to enforce upon his readers; or again, that entitled *Downing Street*, which settles the question of party government as a question of the choice between Buffy and Boodle, or, according to Carlyle, the Honourable Felix Parvulus and the Right Honourable Felicissimus Zero. The corrosive power of such sarcasms may be unquestionable; but the angry rhetoric pointed by them becomes part of the nature of those who habitually employ its utterance in lieu of argument; and not a little of the declamatory element in Dickens, which no doubt at first exercised its effect upon a large number of readers, must be ascribed to his reading of a great writer, who was often very much more stimulative than nutritious.

Something, then, he owed to other writers, but it was little indeed in comparison with what he owed to his natural gifts. First among these, I think, must be placed what may, in a word, be called his sensibility—that quality

[1] The passage in *Oliver Twist* (chapter xxxvii.) which illustrates the maxim that "dignity, and even holiness too, sometimes are more questions of coat and waistcoat than some people imagine," may, or may not, be a reminiscence of *Sartor Resartus*, then (1838) first published in a volume.

of which humour, in the more limited sense of the word, and pathos are the twin products. And in Dickens both these were paramount powers, almost equally various in their forms and effective in their operation. According to M. Taine, Dickens, while he excels in irony of a particular sort, being an Englishman, is incapable of being gay. Such profundities are unfathomable to the readers of *Pickwick*; though the French critic may have generalised from Dickens' later writings only. His pathos is not less true than various, for the gradations are marked between the stern tragic pathos of *Hard Times*, the melting pathos of the *Old Curiosity Shop*, *Dombey and Son*, and *David Copperfield*, and the pathos of helplessness which appeals to us in Smike and Jo. But this sensibility would not have given us Dickens' gallery of living pictures, had it not been for the powers of imagination and observation which enabled him spontaneously to exercise it in countless directions. To the way in which his imagination enabled him to identify himself with the figments of his own brain he frequently testified; Dante was not more certain in his celestial and infernal topography than was Dickens as to "every stair in the little midshipman's house," and as to "every young gentleman's bedstead in Dr. Blimber's establishment." One particular class of phenomena may be instanced instead of many, in the observation and poetic reproduction of which his singular natural endowment continually manifested itself —I mean those of the weather. It is not, indeed, often that he rises to a fine image like that in the description of the night in which Ralph Nickleby, ruined and crushed, slinks home to his death.

> The night was dark, and a cold wind blew, driving the clouds furiously and fast before it. There was one black gloomy mass that seemed to follow him: not hurrying in the wild chase with

the others, but lingering sullenly behind, and gliding darkly and stealthily on. He often looked back at this, and, more than once, stopped to let it pass over; but, somehow, when he went forward again, it was still behind him, coming mournfully and slowly up, like a shadowy funeral train.

But he again and again enables us to feel, as if the Christmas morning on which Mr. Pickwick ran gaily down the slide, or as if the "very quiet" moonlit night in the midst of which a sudden sound, like the firing of a gun or a pistol, startled the repose of Lincoln's Inn Fields, were not only what we have often precisely experienced in country villages or in London squares, but as if they were the very morning and the very night which we *must* experience, if we were feeling the glow of wintry merriment, or the awful chill of the presentiment of evil in a dead hour. In its lower form this combination of the powers of imagination and observation has the rapidity of wit, and, indeed, sometimes *is* wit. The gift of suddenly finding out what a man, a thing, a combination of man and thing, is like—this, too, comes by nature; and there is something electrifying in its sudden exercise, even on the most trivial occasions, as when Flora, delighted with Little Dorrit's sudden rise to fortune, requests to know all

about the good, dear, quiet little thing, and all the changes of her fortunes, carriage people now, no doubt, and horses without number most romantic, a coat-of-arms of course, and wild beasts on their hind legs, showing it as if it was a copy they had done with mouths from ear to ear, good gracious!

But nature, when she gifted Dickens with sensibility, observation, and imagination, had bestowed upon him yet another boon in the quality which seems more prominent

than any other in his whole being. The vigour of Dickens—a mental and moral vigour supported by a splendid physical organism—was the parent of some of his foibles; among the rest, of his tendency to exaggeration. No fault has been more frequently found with his workmanship than this; nor can he be said to have defended himself very successfully on this head when he declared that he did "not recollect ever to have heard or seen the charge of exaggeration made against a feeble performance, though, in its feebleness, it may have been most untrue." But without this vigour he could not have been creative as he was; and in him there were accordingly united with rare completeness a swift responsiveness to the impulses of humour and pathos, an inexhaustible fertility in discovering and inventing materials for their exercise, and the constant creative desire to give to these newly-created materials a vivid plastic form.

And the mention of this last-named gift in Dickens suggests the query whether, finally, there is anything in his *manner* as a writer which may prevent the continuance of his extraordinary popularity. No writer can be great without a manner of his own; and that Dickens had such a manner his most supercilious censurer will readily allow. His terse narrative power, often intensely humorous in its unblushing and unwinking gravity, and often deeply pathetic in its simplicity, is as characteristic of his manner as is the supreme felicity of phrase in which he has no equal. As to the latter, I should hardly know where to begin and where to leave off were I to attempt to illustrate it. But, to take two instances of different kinds of wit, I may cite a passage in Guster's narrative of her interview with Lady Dedlock: "And so I took the letter from her, and she said she had nothing to give me; and *I said I was poor myself,*

and consequently wanted nothing;" and, of a different kind, the account in one of his letters of a conversation with Macready, in which the great tragedian, after a solemn but impassioned commendation of his friend's reading, "put his hand upon my breast and pulled out his pocket-handkerchief, and *I felt as if I were doing somebody to his Werner*." These, I think, were among the most characteristic merits of his style. It also, and more especially in his later years, had its characteristic faults. The danger of degenerating into mannerism is incident to every original manner. There is mannerism in most of the great English prose-writers of Dickens' age—in Carlyle, in Macaulay, in Thackeray—but in none of them is there more mannerism than in Dickens himself. In his earlier writings, in *Nicholas Nickleby*, for instance (I do not, of course, refer to the Portsmouth boards), and even in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, there is much stageyness; but in his later works his own mannerism had swallowed up that of the stage, and, more especially in serious passages, his style had become what M. Taine happily characterises as *le style tourmenté*. His choice of words remained throughout excellent, and his construction of sentences clear. He told Mr. Wilkie Collins that "underlining was not his nature;" and in truth he had no need to emphasise his expressions, or to bid the reader "go back upon their meaning." He recognised his responsibility, as a popular writer, in keeping the vocabulary of the language pure; and in *Little Dorrit* he even solemnly declines to use the French word *trousseau*. In his orthography, on the other hand, he was not free from Americanisms; and his interpunctuation was consistently odd. But these are trifles; his more important mannerisms were, like many really dangerous faults of style, only the excess of characteristic excellences. Thus it was

he who elaborated with unprecedented effect, that humorous species of paraphrase which, as one of the most imitable devices of his style, has also been the most persistently imitated. We are all tickled when Grip, the raven, "issues orders for the instant preparation of innumerable kettles for purposes of tea;" or when Mr. Pecksniff's eye is "piously upraised, with something of that expression which the poetry of ages has attributed to a domestic bird, when breathing its last amid the ravages of an electric storm;" but in the end the device becomes a mere trick of circumlocution. Another mannerism which grew upon Dickens, and was faithfully imitated by several of his disciples, was primarily due to his habit of turning a fact, fancy, or situation round on every side. This consisted in the reiteration of a construction, or of part of a construction, in the strained rhetorical fashion to which he at last accustomed us in spite of ourselves, but to which we were loath to submit in his imitators. These and certain other peculiarities, which it would be difficult to indicate without incurring the charge of hypercriticism, hardened as the style of Dickens hardened; and, for instance, in the *Tale of Two Cities* his mannerisms may be seen side by side in glittering array. By way of compensation, the occasional solecisms and vulgarisms of his earlier style (he only very gradually ridded himself of the cockney habit of punning) no longer marred his pages; and he ceased to break or lapse occasionally, in highly-impassioned passages, into blank verse.

From first to last Dickens' mannerism, like everything which he made part of himself, was not merely assumed on occasion, but was, so to speak, absorbed into his nature. It shows itself in almost everything that he wrote in his later years, from the most carefully-elaborated chapters of

his books down to the most deeply-felt passages of his most familiar correspondence, in the midst of the most genuine pathos and most exuberant humour of his books, and in the midst of the sound sense and unaffected piety of his private letters. Future generations may, for this very reason, be perplexed and irritated by what we merely stumbled at, and may wish that what is an element hardly separable from many of Dickens' compositions were away from them, as one wishes away from his signature that horrible flourish which in his letters he sometimes represents himself as too tired to append.

But no distaste for his mannerisms is likely to obscure the sense of his achievements in the branch of literature to which he devoted the full powers of his genius and the best energies of his nature. He introduced indeed no new species of prose fiction into our literature. In the historical novel he made two far from unsuccessful essays, in the earlier of which in particular—*Barnaby Rudge*—he showed a laudable desire to enter into the spirit of a past age; but he was without the reading or the patience of either the author of *Waverley* or the author of *The Virginians*, and without the fine historic enthusiasm which animates the broader workmanship of *Westward Ho*. For the purely imaginative romance, on the other hand, of which in some of his works Lord Lytton was the most prominent representative in contemporary English literature, Dickens' genius was not without certain affinities; but to feel his full strength, he needed to touch the earth with his feet. Thus it is no mere phrase to say of him that he found the ideal in the real, and drew his inspirations from the world around him. Perhaps the strongest temptation which ever seemed likely to divert him from the sounder forms in which his masterpieces were cast, lay in the

direction of the *novel with a purpose*, the fiction intended primarily and above all things to promote the correction of some social abuse, or the achievement of some social reform. But in spite of himself, to whom the often voiceless cause of the suffering and the oppressed was at all times dearer than any mere literary success, he was preserved from binding his muse, as his friend Cruikshank bound his art, handmaid in a service with which freedom was irreconcileable. His artistic instinct helped him in this, and perhaps also the consciousness that where, as in *The Chimes* or in *Hard Times*, he had gone furthest in this direction, there had been something jarring in the result. Thus, under the influences described above, he carried on the English novel mainly in the directions which it had taken under its early masters, and more especially in those in which the essential attributes of his own genius prompted him to excel.

Among the elements on which the effect alike of the novelist's and of the dramatist's work must, apart from style and diction, essentially depend, that of construction is obviously one of the most significant. In this Dickens was, in the earlier period of his authorship, very far from strong. This was due in part to the accident that he began his literary career as a writer of *Sketches*, and that his first continuous book, *Pickwick*, was originally designed as little more than a string of such. It was due in a still greater measure to the influence of those masters of English fiction with whom he had been familiar from boyhood, above all to Smollett. And though, by dint of his usual energy, he came to be able to invent a plot so generally effective as that of *A Tale of Two Cities*, or, I was about to say, of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, yet on this head he had had to contend against a special difficulty; I mean, of course,

the publication of most of his books in monthly or even weekly numbers. In the case of a writer both pathetic and humorous, the serial method of publication leads the public to expect its due allowance of both pathos and humour every month or week, even if each number, to borrow a homely simile applied in *Oliver Twist* to books in general, need not contain "the tragic and the comic scenes in as regular alternation as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky bacon." And again, as in a melodrama of the old school, each serial division has, if possible, to close emphatically, effectively, with a promise of yet stranger, more touching, more laughable things to come. On the other hand, with this form of publication repetition is frequently necessary by way of "reminder" to indolent readers, whose memory needs refreshing after the long pauses between the acts. Fortunately, Dickens abhorred living, as it were, from hand to mouth, and thus diminished the dangers to which, I cannot help thinking, Thackeray at times almost succumbed. Yet, notwithstanding, in the arrangement of his incidents and the contrivance of his plots it is often impossible to avoid noting the imperfection of the machinery, or at least the traces of effort. I have already said under what influences, in my opinion, Dickens acquired a constructive skill which would have been conspicuous in most other novelists.

If in the combination of parts the workmanship of Dickens was not invariably of the best, on the other hand in the invention of those parts themselves he excelled, his imaginative power and dramatic instinct combining to produce an endless succession of effective scenes and situations, ranging through almost every variety of the pathetic and the humorous. In no direction was nature a more powerful aid to art with him than in this.

From his very boyhood he appears to have possessed in a developed form what many others may possess in its germ, the faculty of converting into a scene—putting, as it were, into a frame—personages that came under his notice, and the background on which he saw them. Who can forget the scene in *David Copperfield*, in which the friendless little boy attracts the wonderment of the good people of the publichouse where—it being a special occasion—he has demanded a glass of their "very best ale, with a head to it"? In the autobiographical fragment already cited, where the story appears in almost the same words, Dickens exclaims:

> Here we stand, all three, before me now, in my study in Devonshire Terrace. The landlord, in his shirt-sleeves, leaning against the bar window-frame; his wife, looking over the little half-door; and I, in some confusion, looking up at them from outside the partition.

He saw the scene while he was an actor in it. Already the *Sketches by Boz* showed the exuberance of this power, and in his last years more than one paper in the delightful *Uncommercial Traveller* series proved it to be as inexhaustible as ever, while the art with which it was exercised had become more refined. Who has better described (for who was more sensitive to it?) the mysterious influence of crowds, and who the pitiful pathos of solitude? Who has ever surpassed Dickens in his representations, varied a thousandfold, but still appealing to the same emotions, common to us all, of the crises or turning-points of human life? Who has dwelt with a more potent effect on that catastrophe which the drama of every human life must reach; whose scenes of death in its pathetic, pitiful, reverend, terrible, ghastly forms speak more to the imagination and more to the heart? There is,

however, one species of scenes in which the genius of Dickens seems to me to exercise a still stronger spell—those which *precede* a catastrophe, which are charged like thunderclouds with the coming storm. And here the constructive art is at work; for it is the arrangement of the incidents, past and to come, combined by anticipation in the mind of the reader, which gives their extraordinary force to such scenes as the nocturnal watching of Nancy by Noah, or Carker's early walk to the railway station, where he is to meet his doom. Extremely powerful, too, in a rather different way, is the scene in *Little Dorrit*, described in a word or two, of the parting of Bar and Physician at dawn, after they have "found out Mr. Merdle's complaint:"

> Before parting, at Physician's door, they both looked up at the sunny morning sky, into which the smoke of a few early fires, and the breath and voices of a few early stirrers, were peacefully rising, and then looked round upon the immense city, and said: "If all those hundreds and thousands of beggared people who were yet asleep could only know, as they two spoke, the ruin that impended over them, what a fearful cry against one miserable soul would go up to Heaven!"

Nor is it awe only, but pity also, which he is able thus to move beforehand, as in *Dombey and Son*, in the incomparable scenes leading up to little Paul's death.

More diverse opinions have been expressed as to Dickens' mastery of that highest part of the novelist's art, which we call characterisation. Undoubtedly, the characters which he draws are included in a limited range. Yet I question whether their range can be justly termed narrow as compared with that commanded by any other great English novelist except Scott, or with those of many novelists of other literatures except Balzac. But

within his own range Dickens is unapproached. His novels do not altogether avoid the common danger of uninteresting heroes and insipid heroines, but only a very few of his heroes are conventionally declamatory like Nicholas Nickleby, and few of his heroines simper sentimentally like Rose Maylie. Nor can I for a moment assent to the condemnation which has been pronounced upon all the female characters in Dickens' books, as more or less feeble or artificial. At the same time it is true that from women of a mightier mould Dickens' imagination turns aside; he could not have drawn a Dorothea Casaubon any more than he could have drawn Romola herself. Similarly, heroes of the chivalrous or magnanimous type, representatives of generous effort in a great cause, will not easily be met with in his writings: he never even essayed the picture of an artist devoted to art for her own sake.

It suited the genius, and in later years perhaps the temper, of Dickens as an author, to leave out of sight those "public virtues" to which no man was in truth less blind than himself, and to remain content with the illustration of types of the private or domestic kind. We may cheerfully take to us the censure that our great humorist was in nothing more English than in this—that his sympathy with the affections of the hearth and the home knew almost no bounds. A symbolisation of this may be found in the honour which, from the *Sketches* and *Pickwick* onwards through a long series of Christmas books and Christmas Numbers, Dickens, doubtless very consciously, paid to the one great festival of English family life. Yet so far am I from agreeing with those critics who think that he is hereby lowered to the level of the poets of the teapot and the plum-pudding, that I am at a loss how to

express my admiration for this side of his genius—tender with the tenderness of Cowper, playful with the playfulness of Goldsmith, natural with the naturalness of the author of *Amelia*. Who was ever more at home with children than he, and, for that matter, with babies to begin with? Mr. Horne relates how he once heard a lady exclaim: "Oh, do read to us about the baby; Dickens is capital at a baby!" Even when most playful, most farcical concerning children, his fun is rarely without something of true tenderness, for he knew the meaning of that dreariest solitude which he has so often pictured, but nowhere, of course, with a truthfulness going so straight to the heart as in *David Copperfield*—the solitude of a child left to itself. Another wonderfully true child-character is that of Pip in *Great Expectations*, who is also, as his years progress, an admirable study of boy-nature. For Dickens thoroughly understood what that mysterious variety of humankind really is, and was always, if one may so say, on the look-out for him. He knew him in the brightness and freshness which makes true *ingénus* of such delightful characters (rare enough in fiction) as Walter Gay and Mrs. Lirriper's grandson. He knew him in his festive mood—witness the amusing letter in which he describes a water-expedition at Eton with his son and two of his irrepressible schoolfellows. He knew him in his precocity—the boy of about three feet high at the George and Vulture, "in a hairy cap and fustian overalls, whose garb bespoke a laudable ambition to attain in time the elevation of an hostler;" and the thing on the roof of the Harrisburg coach, which, when the rain was over, slowly upreared itself, and patronisingly piped out the inquiry: "Well now, stranger, I guess you find this a'most like an English arternoon, hey?" He

knew the Gavroche who danced attendance on Mr. Quilp at his wharf, and those strangest, but by no means least true, types of all, the pupil-teachers in Mr. Fagin's academy.

But these, with the exception of the last-named, which show much shrewd and kindly insight into the paradoxes of human nature, are of course the mere *croquis* of the great humorist's pencil. His men and women, and the passions, the desires, the loves, and hatreds that agitate them, he has usually chosen to depict on that background of domestic life which is in a greater or less degree common to us all. And it is thus also that he has secured to himself the vast public which vibrates very differently from a mere class or section of society to the touch of a popular speaker or writer. "The more," he writes, "we see of life and its brevity, and the world and its varieties, the more we know that no exercise of our abilities in any art, but the addressing of it to the great ocean of humanity in which we are drops, and not to bye-ponds (very stagnant) here and there, ever can or ever will lay the foundations of an endurable retrospect." The types of character which in his fictions he chiefly delights in reproducing are accordingly those which most of us have opportunities enough of comparing with the realities around us; and this test, a sound one within reasonable limits, was the test he demanded. To no other author were his own characters ever more real; and Forster observes, that "what he had most to notice in Dickens at the very outset of his career, was his indifference to any praise of his performances on the merely literary side, compared with the higher recognition of them as bits of actual life, with the meaning and purpose, on their part, and the responsibility on his, of realities, rather than creations of fancy." It is, then, the favourite growths of our own age and country for which we shall most readily

look in his works, and not look in vain: avarice and prodigality; pride in all its phases; hypocrisy in its endless varieties, unctuous and plausible, fawning and self-satisfied, formal and moral; and, on the other side, faithfulness, simplicity, long-suffering patience, and indomitable heroic good-humour. Do we not daily make room on the pavement for Mr. Dombey erect, solemn, and icy, alongside of whom in the road Mr. Carker deferentially walks his sleek horse? Do we not know more than one Anthony Chuzzlewit laying up money for himself and his son, and a curse for both along with it; and many a Richard Carston, sinking, sinking, as the hope grows feebler that Justice or Fortune will at last help one who has not learnt how to help himself? And will not prodigals of a more buoyant kind, like the immortal Mr. Micawber (though, maybe, with an eloquence less ornate than his), when *their* boat is on the shore and *their* bark is on the sea, become "perfectly business-like and perfectly practical," and propose, in acknowledgment of a parting gift we had neither hoped nor desired to see again, "bills" or, if we should prefer it, "a bond, or any other description of security?" All this will happen to us, as surely as we shall be button-holed by Pecksniffs in a state of philanthropic exultation; and watched round corners by 'umble but observant Uriah Heeps; and affronted in what is best in us by the worst hypocrite of all, the hypocrite of religion, who flaunts in our eyes his greasy substitute for what he calls the "light of terewth." To be sure, unless it be Mr. Chadband and those of his tribe, we shall find the hypocrite and the man-out-at-elbows in real life less endurable than their representatives in fiction; for Dickens well understood, "that if you do not administer a disagreeable character carefully, the public have a decided tendency to think that the

story is disagreeable, and not merely the fictitious form." His economy is less strict with characters of the opposite class, true copies of Nature's own handiwork—the Tom Pinches and Trotty Vecks and Clara Peggottys, who reconcile us with our kind, and Mr. Pickwick himself, "a human being replete with benevolence," to borrow a phrase from a noble passage in Dickens' most congenial predecessor. These characters in Dickens have a warmth which only the creations of Fielding and Smollett had possessed before, and which, like these old masters, he occasionally carries to excess. At the other extreme stand those characters in which the art of Dickens, always in union with the promptings of his moral nature, illustrates the mitigating or redeeming qualities observable even in the outcasts of our civilisation. To me his figures of this kind, when they are not too intensely elaborated, are not the least touching; and there is something as pathetic in the uncouth convict Magwitch as in the consumptive crossing-sweeper Jo.

As a matter of course, it is possible to take exceptions of one kind or another to some of the characters created by Dickens in so extraordinary a profusion. I hardly know of any other novelist less obnoxious to the charge of repeating himself; though, of course, many characters in his earlier or shorter works contained in themselves the germs of later and fuller developments. But Bob Sawyer and Dick Swiveller, Noah Claypole and Uriah Heep are at least sufficiently independent variations on the same themes. On the other hand, Filer and Cute, in *The Chimes*, were the first sketches of Gradgrind and Bounderby, in *Hard Times*, and Clemency in *The Battle of Life*, prefigures Peggotty in *David Copperfield*. No one could seriously quarrel with such repetitions as these, and

there are remarkably few of them; for the fertile genius of Dickens took delight in the variety of its creativeness, and, as if to exemplify this, there was no relation upon the contrasted humours of which he better loved to dwell than that of partnership. It has been seen how rarely his inventive power condescended to supplement itself by what in the novel corresponds to the mimicry of the stage, and what in truth is as degrading to the one as it is to the other—the reproduction of originals *from real life*. On the other hand, he carries his habit too far of making a particular phrase do duty as an index of a character. This trick also is a trick of the stage, where it often enough makes the judicious grieve. Many may be inclined to censure it in Dickens as one of several forms of the exaggeration which is so frequently condemned in him. There was no charge to which he was more sensitive; and in the preface to *Martin Chuzzlewit* he accordingly (not for the first time) turned round upon the objectors, declaring roundly that "what is exaggeration to one class of minds and perceptions is plain truth to another;" and hinting a doubt "whether it is *always* the writer who colours highly, or whether it is now and then the reader whose eye for colour is a little dull." I certainly do not think that the term "exaggerated" is correctly applied to such conventional characters of sensational romance as Rosa Dartle, who has, as it were, lost her way into *David Copperfield*, while Hortense and Madame Defarge seem to be in their proper places in *Bleak House*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*. In his earlier writings, and in the fresher and less overcharged serious parts of his later books, he rarely if ever paints black in black; even the Jew Fagin has a moment of relenting against the sleeping

Oliver; he is not that unreal thing, a "demon," whereas Sikes is that real thing, a brute. On the other hand, certainly he at times makes his characters more laughable than nature; few great humorists have so persistently sought to efface the line which separates the barely possible from the morally probable. This was, no doubt, largely due to his inclination towards the grotesque, which a severer literary training might have taught him to restrain; thus he liked to introduce insane or imbecile personages into fiction, where, as in real life, they are often dangerous to handle. It is to his sense of the grotesque, rather than to any deep-seated satirical intention, and certainly not to any want of reverence or piety in his very simple and very earnest nature, that I would likewise ascribe the exaggeration and unfairness of which he is guilty against Little Bethel and all its works. But in this, as in other instances, no form of humour requires more delicate handling than the grotesque, and none is more liable to cause fatigue. Latterly, Dickens was always adding to his gallery of eccentric portraits, and, if inner currents may be traced by outward signs, it may be worth while to apply the test of his *names*, which become more and more odd as their owners deviate more and more from the path of nature. Who more simply and yet more happily named than the leading members of the Pickwick Club—from the poet, Mr. Snodgrass, to the sportsman, Mr. Winkle—Nathaniel, not Daniel; but with Veneering and Lammle, and Boffin and Venus, and Crisparkle and Grewgious—be they actual names or not—we feel instinctively that we are in the region of the transnormal.

Lastly, in their descriptive power and the faithfulness with which they portray the life and ways of particular periods or countries, of special classes, professions, or other

divisions of mankind, the books of Dickens are, again of course within their range, unequalled. He sought his materials chiefly at home, though his letters from Italy and Switzerland and America, and his French pictures in sketch and story, show how much wider a field his descriptive powers might have covered. The *Sketches by Boz* and the *Pickwick Papers* showed a mastery, unsurpassed before or since, in the description of the life of English society in its middle and lower classes, and in *Oliver Twist* he lifted the curtain from some of the rotten parts of our civilisation. This history of a workhouse child also sounded the note of that sympathy with the poor which gave to Dickens' descriptions of their sufferings and their struggles a veracity beyond mere accuracy of detail. He was still happier in describing their household virtues, their helpfulness to one another, their compassion for those who are the poorest of all—the friendless and the outcast—as he did in his *Old Curiosity Shop*, and in most of his Christmas books. His pictures of middle-class life abounded in kindly humour; but the humour and pathos of poverty—more especially the poverty which has not yet lost its self-respect—commended themselves most of all to his descriptive power. Where, as in *Nicholas Nickleby* and later works, he essayed to describe the manners of the higher classes, he was, as a rule, far less successful: partly because there was in his nature a vein of rebellion against the existing system of society, so that except in his latest books, he usually approached a description of members of its dominant orders with a satirical intention, or at least an undertone of bitterness. At the same time, I demur to the common assertion that Dickens could not draw a real gentleman. All that can be said is that it very rarely suited his purpose to do so, supposing the term to include manners as well as feelings

and actions; though Mr. Twemlow, in *Our Mutual Friend*, might be instanced as a (perhaps rather conscious) exception of one kind, and Sir Leicester Dedlock, in the latter part of *Bleak House*, as another. Moreover, a closer examination of Lord Frederick Verisopht and Cousin Feenix will show that, gull as the one, and ninny as the other is, neither has anything that can be called ungentlemanly about him; on the contrary, the characters, on the whole, rather plead in favour of the advantage than of the valuelessness of blue blood. As for Dickens' other noblemen, whom I find enumerated in an American dictionary of his characters, they are nearly all mere passing embodiments of satirical fancies, which pretend to be nothing more.

Another ingenious enthusiast has catalogued the numerous callings, professions, and trades of the personages appearing in Dickens' works. I cannot agree with the criticism that in his personages the man is apt to become forgotten in the externals of his calling—the barrister's wig and gown, as it were, standing for the barrister, and the beadle's cocked hat and staff for the beadle. But he must have possessed in its perfection the curious detective faculty of deducing a man's occupation from his manners. To him nothing wore a neutral tint, and no man or woman was featureless. He was, it should be remembered, always observing; half his life he was afoot. When he undertook to describe any novel or unfamiliar kind of manners, he spared no time or trouble in making a special study of his subject. He was not content to know the haunts of the London thieves by hearsay, or to read the history of opium-smoking and its effects in Blue-books. From the office of his journal in London, we find him starting on these self-imposed commissions, and from his hotel in New York. The whole art of descriptive reporting, which has no doubt produced a

large quantity of trashy writing, but has also been of real service in arousing a public interest in neglected corners of our social life, was, if not actually set on foot, at any rate reinvigorated and vitalised by him. No one was so delighted to notice the oddities which habit and tradition stereotype in particular classes of men; a complete natural history of the country actor, the London landlady, and the British waiter might be compiled from his pages. This power of observation and description extended from human life to that of animals. His habits of life could not but make him the friend of dogs, and there is some reason for a title which was bestowed on him in a paper in a London magazine concerning his own dogs—the Landseer of Fiction. His letters are full of delightful details concerning these friends and companions, Turk, Linda, and the rest of them; nor is the family of their fictitious counterparts, culminating (intellectually) in Merrylegs, less numerous and delightful. Cats were less congenial to Dickens, perhaps because he had no objection to changing house; and they appear in his works in no more attractive form than as the attendant spirits of Mrs. Pipchin and of Mr. Krook. But for the humours of animals in general he had a wonderfully quick eye. Of his ravens I have already spoken. The pony Whisker is the type of kind old gentlemen's ponies. In one of his letters occurs an admirably droll description of the pig-market at Boulogne; and the best unscientific description ever given of a spider was imagined by Dickens at Broadstairs, when in his solitude he thought

> of taming spiders, as Baron Trenck did. There is one in my cell (with a speckled body and twenty-two very decided knees) who seems to know me.

In everything, whether animate or inanimate, he found out at once the characteristic feature, and reproduced it in

words of faultless precision. This is the real secret of his descriptive power, the exercise of which it would be easy to pursue through many other classes of subjects. Scenery, for its own sake, he rarely cared to describe; but no one better understood how to reproduce the combined effect of scenery and weather on the predisposed mind. Thus London and its river in especial are, as I have said, haunted by the memory of Dickens' books. To me it was for years impossible to pass near London Bridge at night, or to idle in the Temple on summer days, or to frequent a hundred other localities on or near the Thames, without instinctively recalling pictures scattered through the works of Dickens—in this respect, also, a real *liber veritatis*.

Thus, and in many ways which it would be labour lost to attempt to describe, and by many a stroke or touch of genius which it would be idle to seek to reproduce in paraphrase, the most observing and the most imaginative of our English humorists revealed to us that infinite multitude of associations which binds men together, and makes us members one of another. But though observation and imagination might discern and discover these associations, sympathy—the sympathy of a generous human heart with humanity—alone could breathe into them the warmth of life. Happily, to most men, there is one place consecrated above others to the feelings of love and goodwill; "that great altar where the worst among us sometimes perform the worship of the heart, and where the best have offered up such sacrifices and done such deeds of heroism as, chronicled, would put the proudest temples of old time, with all their vaunting annals, to the blush." It was thus that Dickens spoke of the sanctity of *home*; and, English in many things, he was most English in that love of home to which he was never weary of testifying. But, though the "path-

way of the sublime "may have been closed to him, he knew well enough that the interests of a people and the interests of humanity are mightier than the domestic loves and cares of any man; and he conscientiously addressed himself, as to the task of his life, to the endeavour to knit humanity together. The method which he, by instinct and by choice, more especially pursued was that of seeking to show the "good in everything." This it is that made him, unreasonably sometimes, ignobly never, the champion of the poor, the helpless, the outcast. He was often tempted into a rhetoric too loud and too shrill, into a satire neither fine nor fair; for he was impatient, but not impatient of what he thought true and good. His purpose, however, was worthy of his powers; nor is there recorded among the lives of English men of letters any more single-minded in its aim, and more successful in the pursuit of it, than his. He was much criticised in his lifetime; and he will, I am well aware, be often criticised in the future by keener and more capable judges than myself. They may miss much in his writings that I find in them; but, unless they find one thing there, it were better that they never opened one of his books. He has indicated it himself when criticising a literary performance by a clever writer:

> In this little MS. everything is too much patronised and condescended to, whereas the slightest touch of feeling for the rustic who is of the earth earthy, or of sisterhood with the homely servant who has made her face shine in her desire to please, would make a difference that the writer can generally imagine without trying it. You don't want any sentiment laboriously made out in such a thing. You don't want any maudlin show of it. But you do want a pervading suggestion that it is there.

The sentiment which Dickens means is the salt which will give a fresh savour of their own to his works so long as our language endures.

THE END.

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